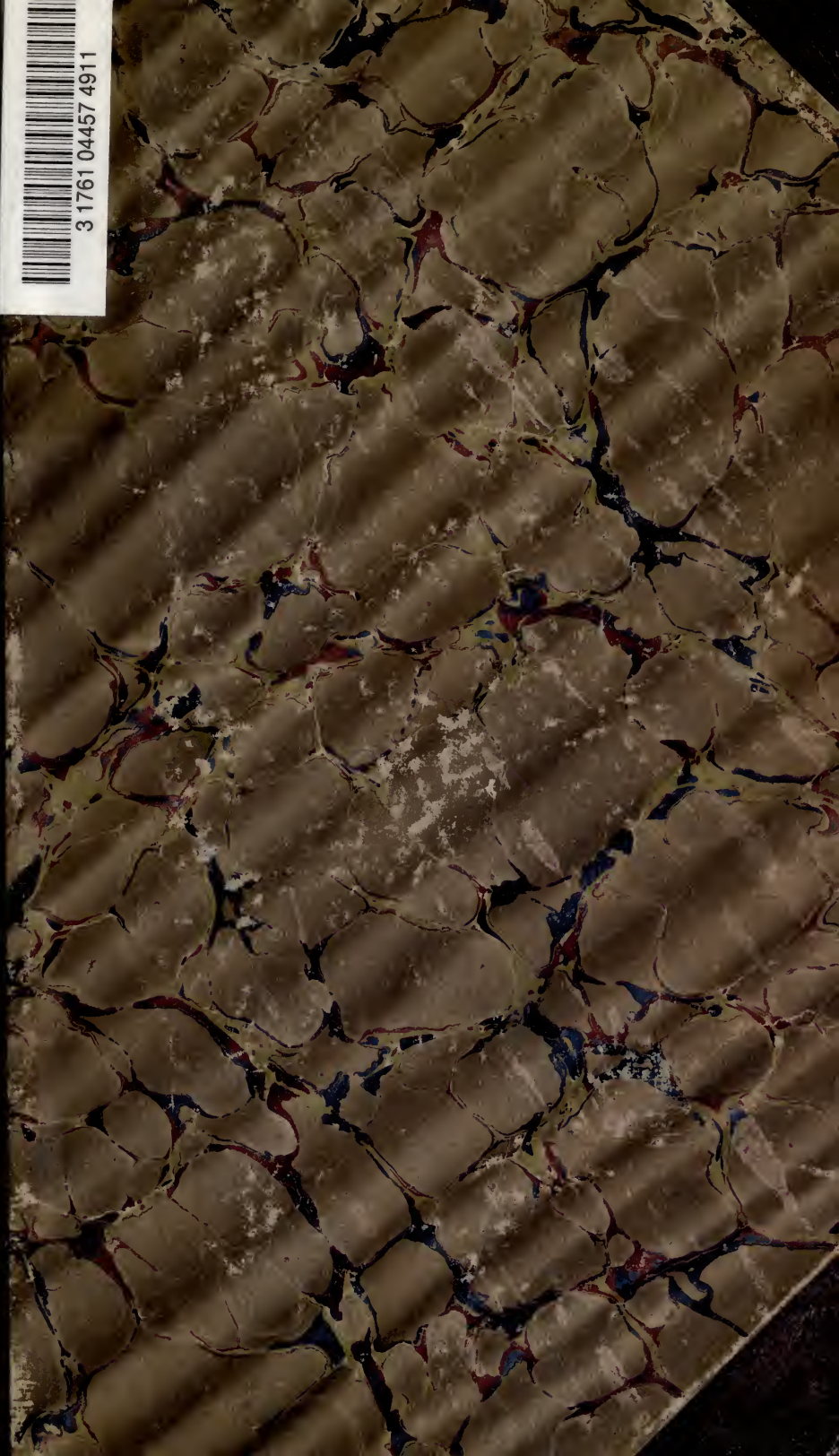
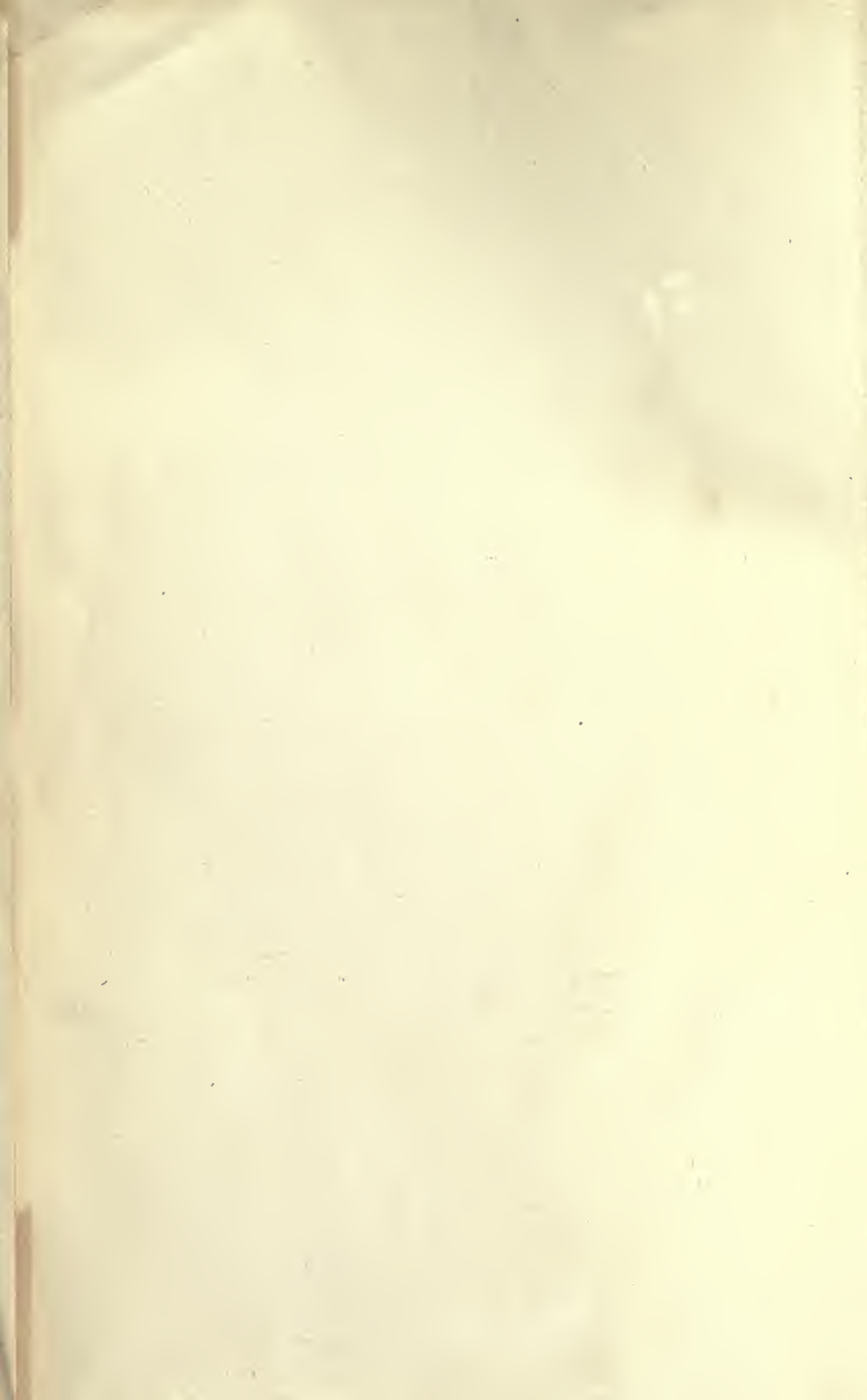




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MY LITTLE GIRL.

G. B. Harris

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A Nobel.

BY THE AUTHORS OF "READY-MONEY MORTIBOY."



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MY LITTLE GIRL.

BOOK I.—IN THE ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

IN the great stormy ocean — that part of it which is bounded by the Bay of Bengal on the west, and the coast of Mexico on the east (or thereabouts) — lies the island which the French, when they had it, called *Ile des Palmistes*; but which the English, on taking it at the beginning of this century, patriotically named after their great and good regent, Prince George. The geography books call it Prince George's Island still; but no one out of England knows it by any other name than the *Ile des Palmistes*: and all English people, with the exception of the Colonial Office, know it by the name of *Palmiste Island*. It lies, in its rounded and graceful curves, like a maiden at rest, within a silver ring of surf, breaking over the coral reef, in latitude 18° S., — a latitude, which I take to be the most delightful in the world, especially in a country where you can get highlands to live in, and a constant sea-breeze to fan you. In *Palmiste Island* the sea-breeze blows all the year round, sometimes giving way to a warm west wind, which comes from the neighboring continent, and sometimes lashing itself to fury, no one knows why, and performing prodigies as a hurricane. It is bad at these times to be at sea, because all the ships go down: but it is perhaps worse to be on shore; for there the roads are mere rushing rivers, down which the wayfarer is hurried by the flood to meet an untimely fate. The gardens are stormy lakes, trees are blown about like leaves, roofs of houses are lifted like sheets of paper, and

men, if they are so unlucky as not to get shelter, are sometimes take up towards heaven, like *Elijah*; only, like the prophet, they generally come down again with the breakage of a good many legs, arms, ribs, and whatever bones happen to be most easily fractured. If the hurricane lasts long enough, the people, shut in their houses, are starved for want of provisions; and, while it blows, there is no means of cooking what they have. It has its advantages; for, after it is over, all the planters, who were shaky before take the earliest opportunity of going through the form of bankruptcy, and excite universal commiseration for their hard fate, as they enlarge on the thousands of pounds' worth of canes or coffee that the hurricane has destroyed. Once clear of debt, they go on again with light hearts and renewed hope. By some curious inversion of the laws of political and social economy, very few, either debtors or creditors, unless they are English, seem the worse for their calamities. I have some idea, though not in this place, of putting forth a treatise on this important subject from a novel and tropical point of view. My readers will perhaps bear this in mind, and buy me, when I do appear, on "*The Northern and Temperate Zone System*."

After the hurricane, the papers — there are six daily organs of opinion in the island, two on straw paper, two on a peculiar fabric something stiffer than tissue, and something coarser than homespun, and two on real paper — live for a fortnight at least on the correspondence which pours in. An "*Occasional Correspondent*" writes to detail the effects in his town, an important centre of at least three hundred people; a

"Special" narrates the effects in the adjoining hamlet, half a mile removed; "Our Own" writes from the other end of the island, fully thirty miles away: they all sign their names, and run up to town the next day to receive the congratulations of their friends. They arrive with folded arms and brows knit. This illustrates the majesty of literature, since even these small dallings with the muse produce such mighty throes of the mental system. And in a month all is repaired: the fields move again with the yellow-green canes, the dark coffee bushes blacken the hillsides, the roofs are all put on brand-new, the bankrupts have got fresh estates, or retain their old ones through the clemency of their creditors, and all is as it was. And in the Ile des Palmistes nothing changes but the men.

These are a heterogeneous race. They lie like a parti-colored pyramid, the single stone at the top representing his Excellency the Governor. The lowest stratum is composed of Coolies. These excellent beasts of burden supply the place of the old slaves. I do not think they are exactly kidnapped; but I believe it is demonstrable that very few of them have distinct ideas of their future when they embark on board the emigrant ship off Calcutta or Madras. On the other hand, their condition is certainly improved by the step. They get better wages and a larger access to drink; they do not work very hard; they are well fed; and, if they are beaten with sticks, they may, if they like, have up their employer for assault. To be beaten with sticks carries, however, no sense of personal degradation with it, and generally hurts little, much less than the docking of wages, which is the only alternative. Consequently, despite laws and fines, Old Father Stick, the first lawgiver, still retains a certain amount of authority. Then, again, their children can go to school, if there happens to be a school near; and, when they are taught to write, come in handy at forging leaves of absence, passes, and such-like small helps to making life pleasant. At least once in six months, too, a missionary comes their way, and beguiles the time for half an hour after sundown by telling them they are going to that place where they will find all their good resolutions. This raises an animated discussion for the evening, and helps to fill up the missionary's trimestrial letter. He writes this the next morning, after a comfortable dinner at the planter's house, with half a dozen cigars, and two or three goes of brandy and soda. The English collector of those stray shillings which go to make up the million a year spent in this noble work may read the half-hour described as follows:

"Tuesday. Rose half an hour before dawn. Thought of Zech. li. 32. Rode, on my journeying, through the gigantic forest to the estate of Fontainebleau. Having obtained permission to preach the Word, spent a long time in deeply interesting conversation with the laborers in the village. All were eager to learn. Alamoodée, an aged Tamul man of sixty-five, was particularly anxious to hear the good tidings. And I was greatly pleased with the intelligent look of Mounia and Cassis, two young Indian women of about sixteen. I left them a few tracts, and they laughed, putting their fingers in their mouths in the artless Indian manner. They cannot read, but others can read to them. In the evening news came that the husband of Mounia was beating her for some alleged misconduct. How sweet it is to sow the seed! Alamoodée, poor fellow, was brought in next morning on a charge of drunkenness, but dismissed with a fine and caution. I have reason to believe it was a conspiracy. The hard toils of the humble missionary have often no reward but hope."

The next stratum on our pyramid is coal-black. This is composed of all the negroes now left alive. Thirty-six years ago they were emancipated, — a hundred thousand, of all ages. There are now about ten thousand. For receiving their freedom with a joy which argued well for the future, as their admirers said, they proceeded to make a solemn covenant and agreement; not on paper, for they had none, and could not write; nor by special Parliament, for they never met; nor by mutual exhortation, for they never talked about it, — but by that more certain method, the silent consent of the nation, the inarticulate vox populi. They agreed, one with the other, that they would never do any more work at all. And they never have done any. They have kept this resolution with the unbending obstinacy of the medical student who promised his aunt that he would lay aside his studies on the sabbath. It has been a pleasant time with them, but somehow they have not prospered. They are dying out. They live in little patches of garden, where they plant potatoes and lettuces, bananas, beans, and such things as grow by themselves, and cost little trouble. What they cannot eat themselves, they sell for rice and rum. When they desire to make a feast, the nearest planter's poultry-yard supplies the materials. They smoke their pipes in great peace, while the vertical sun strikes upon their roofless hats, and penetrates pleasantly through the woolly protection of nature; they talk but little, and then of soothing subjects, such as the cheapness of rum, the excellence of

their bananas, and their own amazing sagacity; and they laugh on small provocation, seeing great jokes and effects of humor when graver men look on with a smile. Sometimes they call themselves—all out of the gayety of their hearts—carpenters; and, if you trust them, will build you a house whose windows are of unequal height and differing dimensions. They laugh when you point out this incongruity of things; and, if you foolishly get into a rage, they only laugh the more—but at a distance. When they marry, they buy a large mosquito curtain as a proof of respectability; and their highest ambition is to have a piano.

Their wives and daughters love to go to church in white kid gloves and a parasol. Their husbands follow, walking behind in bare feet, battered straw hats, and blue stuff coats. Or, if they are richer, they have a black coat and blue stuff trousers. The ladies are mightily devout; and go through the external part of religion with great fervency. The men kneel down, and continue kneeling, with what is called the sweet, sad intelligence of the African race, till they catch the eye of a friend; then you may see two frames convulsed with a mighty struggle. Finally, quite overcome, they go out into the churchyard, and laugh on a tombstone till the service is over; taking turns to laugh at each other, like an Aristophanic chorus.

By degrees they get old: their wool becomes gray; the fine calf which once adorned that part of the leg with us called shin, shrinks and shrivels; the heel projects another two inches or so behind, the frame gets bent, but the man is the same. He does not know that he is old; he does not know how long he has lived, or how long men usually live. Presently, to his utter amazement, he positively dies; and thinks himself cut off prematurely, although he has numbered eighty summers. Certainly he has had no winters, because there is no winter there.

The best of them go fishing, and are very handy with their boats. Some few have been pushed on in the world; but their patrons generally drop them, on account of defects which make them a little lower than those angels we English once took the race to be. The half-educated fellows are very bad specimens indeed. A hog in black clothes, a monkey with a book before him, would be fair types of their morals and philosophy. As a rule, they drink themselves to death; and as there are, fortunately, but few of them, they hardly count.

Let us get a step higher. The next stratum is the oddest of all: it is the Chinese layer. I have the greatest liking for

this folk. There is a profundity, coupled with cynicism, in their look, that few English philosophers possess. They seldom laugh, they despise all people but themselves, they make money diligently, live laboriously, fare badly, drink little, are clever artisans, can be relied upon in matters of work; and, with all these virtues, are so clogged and burdened with vice that they cannot rise. To smoke opium, to gamble all day, and to do one or two other things that Western civilization denounces, form their ideal heaven. They are convivial too. Their gravity is the result of education, not of nature; it is grafted, not indigenous. Witness the air of suppressed fun, inseparable from the nature of the action, with which two of them carry a pig between them on a pole, or attend a pork-devouring religious ceremony, or let off crackers at the funeral of a friend, or sell you a box of sardines. And more remarkable still, they are all alike. I do not know how they get over the possible complications that might be caused by this circumstance. I suppose care is taken so far as the rights of property and the domestic relations are concerned. At least, I never heard but once of any case in which the national likeness was taken advantage of. This was when Ah-Kang—I knew him well; a good fellow, but deficient in the finer shades of moral principle—going into the shop of Kong-Fow, found his poor friend lying dead behind his own counter. He thereupon conceived the brilliant notion of burying him in the garden, and taking his place. This plan he carried into effect, and for three months drove a good trade, his friend's name and titles, painted by an imperfectly educated Creole, being all the time on the door-post as follows:—

MR KONGFOW ESQ
IRE LICENS'D DEE
LER IN TOBAC
CO RETAILER
OF SPIRRUTS

N.B. — DAY AND MARTIN'S BEST
BLACKING.

Then he was found out. I forget how.

Another step. We are among the mulattoes. I suppose this is the most intelligent class in the community, because they are always saying so. For the same reason, they are the most truthful, the least addicted to the ordinary frailties and backslidings of human nature, the most religious, the most trustworthy, the most enterprising, the most polished, and the bravest.

That no one else says so is a clear proof of the malignity of other people. Scandal

hints that they hate their fathers for being white, and despise their mothers for being black: their enemies maintain that they have the vices of both races, and the virtues of neither; and, though they have barristers, physicians, and lawyers of their own, assert that their science is worthless, their eloquence froth, and their law chicanery. When all is told, I dare say, if they could forget their black blood, they would not be a bad set. The thing that rankles in their bosoms, the injustice that sets their blood aglow, is that white people, who shake hands with them on the Exchange, and meet them on terms of equality in the courts of law, will neither enter their houses, nor sit at meat with them, nor introduce them to their wives. The law, which formerly forbade them to wear boots, has given them all the rights of civic equality; but no law can remove the prejudices of caste. Are they worse off than we in Europe? Are there not houses where we, who grace the district of W.C., enter only on a kind of sufferance? Does not the Faubourg St. Germain still exist, eighty years after the Revolution? Would the Duke of St. Smithfield, whose grandfather began life as a journeyman baker, and ended as an earl, sully his blue blood by letting his fair daughter marry me — me, the author? And are we, therefore, dear inhabitants of Bloomsbury, to eat out our hearts in malice?

Our pyramid narrows. Next we come to the planters and the merchants, the English and the French. With the merchants we have nothing to do. Let me try to show you a planter's house. But first, for I am tired of my pyramid, let me clear it off and have done with it. The next stratum is the governing body, — the officers sent out by England. Palmiste Island is a Crown colony. Therefore, the officers are generally men of good family, if of small means. Their posts do not enable them, as a rule, to save much, but they save a little; and, when the time comes for retiring, they have something more than their pension to fall back upon. They are not usually a remarkably brilliant set of men; but they are generally well-bred, and possessed of tact. The Government cart goes on smoothly enough. There are few real grievances, and there would be no imaginary ones were it not for the daily papers. The judges are just; the Crown law-officers have sufficient ability; the bishop is pious and bland; the Colonial Secretary is cautious: things get put by for a more favorable opportunity, and then right themselves. And the top story, the apex, the crown of the building, his Excellency the Governor-General of Prince

George's Island and its dependencies, gives dinners to the *élite*, balls to society in general, receives whom the Colonial Secretary sends to him, and composes long despatches recommending reforms which will make the colony a paradise. He is obliged to write them, to show his zeal, though it must be a fearful bore. And, when they come home, some young clerk in the Colonial Office, who knows as much of Palmiste as of Timbuctoo, annotates the labored thoughts of the experienced statesman, and snubs him. This done, according to rule, the despatches are put in a book, and carefully bound up to be preserved forever. There are now so many of these hapless children of thought, smothered as soon as born, and kept as calf-bound mummies in Downing Street, that a few years since they were compelled to move them all to the cellars. Their weight was pressing out and crushing down the walls; and it was feared that their presence, longer continued, might possibly result in the demolition of the whole fabric. Shades of departed governors, pensionless wanderers by Brighton sands, consider with gratitude the Nemesis that waits on the contempt of your labors!

CHAPTER II.

THE estate I am going to take you to is called Fontainebleau. All the estates in the Ile des Palmistes have these pretty French names. One is called Mon Songe, another Mon Rêve. There is a Trianon, a St. Cloud, a Sorèze, an Amboise, a Chenonceaux: there are Beau Plan, Belle Vue, Riche en Eaux, Belle Rivière, Savanne; there are Lucie, Eugénie, Adrienne, and Louise. All the poetry in the heart of the owner is lavished on the name of his estate. "All the same," as a wandering jockey once observed to me, "as the owners of the 'orses in the Derby," — a remark which seems to throw a new and very pretty light upon horse-racing.

Fontainebleau lay on the confines of the great forest that filled the centre of the island. On one side rose hills — not the round, indolent hills of England; but sharp, eager, ambitious little mountains, scarped with precipices fifty and a hundred feet high, jagged with peaks, and cut with passes, for all the world like a row of Alps. These pretentious elevations tower upwards at least five hundred feet, and are covered with wood, except in small spaces cleared for coffee. They look down upon the broad fields of Fontainebleau. Planted with canes, the acres stretch down the sloping

land towards the sea, kindly mother earth rounding, as it were, into a breast of fertility. As the sun takes his swift, long course midway in the heavens, the yellow-green crops wear a thousand different shades of light: now as the wind turns up the dark hidden side of the leaf, — now as it flutters out the bright upper part; now when the cane is in flower, when it blows about the feathery beauty like the trappings of a helmet; or now, when the clouds fly here and there in dark shadows along the glorious colors; and always the sea-breeze raises the gentle waves of the field, like the sweet unrest of a sea which never knows a storm.

An English corn-field, when the sun shines upon it, is a sight to admire; but an estate planted with canes, in all their richness of color and beauty of form, is one to fill the eye with those tears which rise at the contemplation of nature at its best, — tears from no divine despair, but perhaps from a sense of the unfitness of man for the earth. In the cities, it is not felt; but in the lonely corners of the world, in those tiny spots of the ocean where God's finger seems to have lingered longest, delicately shaping sweet river-courses, shady glens, ravines, cascades, and quaint mountain tops, where nature is most productive and man most out of sight, the heart is saddened, the eyes dimmed.

Fontainebleau was a very quiet place, and a lonely. To north and east lay the great silent forest. To south only, it opened out; and, standing in the road, one could see ten miles of land — ten miles, rather, of waving canes — before the ocean seemed to rise up like a wall, and bar the prospect. Looking over the sailless sea — for no ships ever came that way — the misanthrope might derive a sense of freedom from feeling, that, far and wide, no land interposed between the headland beneath him and the barren peaks of the Antarctic shores, far to the south; but the broad fields looked hot, thirsty, and parched. It was better to turn northwards, and, climbing over the wall which kept out the deer, and was a nightly gymnasium for the monkeys, dive into the glades and recesses of the forest.

I suppose it would have been difficult to lose one's self in it. One might, perhaps, wander about in it for a few days; but sooner or later the end of it must have been reached. It is not very large, — ten miles one way, by perhaps thirty another. There are few paths in it; but a man has only to keep going by the sun to arrive somewhere near his destination. And then there are no perils in it. Nothing more harmful lurks in its recesses than the monkey, — a gigantic beast, — species, say, ourang-outang — of at least a foot and a half high. There are

also deer, the little bristly jungle pig, and perhaps a wild cat or two, — that is, a tame cat gone wild; not a panther or a leopard, or any thing of that nature, understand. There was a tiger. He got away from a menagerie, and betook himself to the woods. Of his end there are two legends. For some maintain that he died of indigestion, having eaten an old negro who disagreed with him; others, with greater plausibility, affirm that his nature has been changed, — *animum cum cælo, mutavit*, — that he has been distinctly visible in the gray of the morning, filing his teeth in bowlders, and that he lives retired in the mountains, — a vegetarian, shunning the sight of man. And this they allege as a proof of the mildness and placability induced by the climate of Palmiste Island. There was once, also, a crocodile. He, too, escaped, being yet quite young, and unfortunately mistook a water-pipe for a cavern or retreat made specially for his behoof. There, many weeks afterwards, he was discovered, choked, — a gruesome body; and Englishmen must needs take consecutive sodas and b.'s as a corrective and preservative against any small matter of putrefaction that may have entered their bodies through incautiously drinking the water unmixed, — a thing quite improbable on the face of it, and entirely contrary to their known habits. Lastly, there was once found — as the ballads say, I do not lie — *half a snake*, the tail half. How it got there, where the other half was, whether he had a sister or a brother, a father or a mother, or a dearer and nearer one still, in the jungle, was never ascertained. And in all the annals of Palmiste, no other snake, crocodile, or tiger was ever found in the whole island.

As a set-off against this immunity from danger, the forest is almost silent and inexpressibly dreary. Save here and there the faint chatter of a monkey, or the occasional cry of a *coq-de-bois*, the silence is profound and oppressive. Few birds are there in Palmiste, — very few in the forest. They have two natural enemies, — monkeys and hurricanes. The former take down their nests, and destroy their eggs, — all out of pure mischief; and the latter blow their nests and eggs and all into the sea.

But besides the mournfulness of its silence, the mere aspect of the forest saddens if you stay in it too long. For a bright, cheery, glorious wood, where you may picnic, wander, or build castles of future greatness, I prefer the New Forest; for a poetical, dreamy place, where you may make poetry and *chansons de geste* that of Fontainebleau — in France, I mean; for a sweet-smelling, sentimental wood, a place where one can

walk with one's love, and fall into tender talk of eternity and heaven, and all sweet hopes and confiding trusts, I prefer a pine forest on the lower slopes of a Tyrolese Alp. But for a place where death and decay stare you in the face, — where if you stay your steps, you fall presently to musing on a mis-spent life, go to the forest in the centre of Palmiste. There, when you mark the giant creeper crushing the life out of some great monarch of the wood, curling round him like the prieve, with its countless arms, think of evil habits, and remind yourself how man never shakes them off, and how the soul is choked with them. Then remember your own, and abandon hope. Or when you see the dense mass of trees, — so thick that they press against one another, so close together that they never dream of such a thing as leaves till they are thirty or forty feet high, — think of men in great cities, how thick they are, and how they fight for life, and give up all prospect of aught but toil and labor and oblivion, till the end comes. Presently you will come — it lies in your path — upon a large pillow-like mass of green, soft moss; put your foot upon it — it sinks through to the hip. This was once a great tree. It lies where it has fallen; its wood is rotten and wasted; no one ever noticed its beauty, and it served no purpose in life or in death. Then draw your moral, sitting in the shade.

I extract most of this description from a discourse I once pronounced in my friend Venn's rooms. He maintains that such a forest as I have described would affect him with a lively joy; and points out how all that I have named would but serve to raise his spirits, and fill him with gratitude and hope. Nature can be read in two ways. In all her moods there are joy and hope, and in all there are mockery and despair. I tell of the forest as it affected me.

There are two or three little water-courses running out of the forest through the estate, which the simple islanders call rivers. These bubbling streams speedily cut out little ravines for themselves, and go brawling about among the bowlders at the bottom as if most important business, not to be deferred a moment, hurried them down. Here and there they disappear, and you may hear them grumbling below. When they emerge, it is to make a great leap, as if for joy, into a basin where the water runs round and round in a mighty hurry to get away. These ravines are dark and narrow; the steep, sloping banks crowded with trees and brambles. Rich and rare ferns lurk under the shadows, orchids almost priceless are found in the branches; and you never by any chance meet any one if you care to wander down the ravines ex-

cept perhaps a bevy of Indian damsels with their hair down, performing their ablutions, like Bathsheba of old, in the open.

By one of these rivers stands the residence of Fontainebleau. It is a large, deeply-veranded wooden house, with wooden tiles for roofs, all on one floor. All the rooms open into each other, and on the veranda. They are furnished with a curious mixture of things costly and things rude. There is a rough, common table side by side with chairs that might do duty in Belgravia. A piano-forte which has never been tuned, and never been opened for no one knows how many years, is in one corner, littered with powder-flasks and shooting gear; a tall bookcase, filled with volumes whose bindings have once been splendid; but which are now dropping off the books from damp; a few pictures, a great pile of newspapers, and a general air of comfort and negligence, — mark a drawing-room where there has been no lady for many years. The dining-room is behind: it has a great table and a side-board, both of which were once, it may be presumed, new, but which are now mere monuments of neglected mahogany. It has no other furniture, because the chairs of the house have generally succumbed to time the destroyer; and now at dinner-time they take them out of the drawing-room, and bring them back after dinner. Not that they are ever wanted; for easy chairs stand on the veranda, and cigars are best smoked in the cool night air.

At the back of the house, outside, stands the kitchen of the Indian cook, — a place whence come savory things, but within which no one was ever known to penetrate, except one man. He came out with pale face and trembling limbs. They gave him brandy. Presently he recovered; but he never afterwards was known to touch pudding in Palmiste. I believe too, that he died young. And the bedrooms, each furnished with gay little iron bedsteads and mosquito curtains, are, like the sitting-rooms, made to open on the veranda. There are not many of these inhabited now; for the gay days of Fontainebleau are over, and the gray-haired man who lives there now has little companionship save that of his son and his nephew. The society of the town twenty-five miles away has nothing to do with him. He is out of it now, and forgotten; save once or twice a year, when at some great hunting party in the forest, he appears pale and melancholy, and old men whisper that poor George Durnford is the ghost of himself. Time was, they tell you, when George was the soul of the island. The ex-cavalry officer, who got into such a devil of a mess with

his colonel, and had to sell out; who came to Palmiste twenty years ago, and bought Fontainebleau; who married Adrienne — la belle Adrienne — niece and ward of Henri de Rosnay; who led the life of the place, and was foremost in every thing social and genial, — can it be the same person?

More of him hereafter. Let me finish with the house.

About the veranda, or in the dining-room, or about the kitchen, are the boys — Indians — who belong to the service of the house. There are some half-dozen of them, dressed in a sort of tight cotton jacket, with little caps, looking, as they are, full of intelligence and life. These, with the bright, fearless look in the eyes, and the slender grace of the limbs, vanish when the boy passes the threshold of manhood; and he becomes heavy, sluggish, and sensual. At present, however, the boys are from eight to twelve years old, and make the best servants in the world. Mendacious they are, it is true, and as destructive as monkeys; but, if one is going to be thrashed for breaking a glass, it is just as well to say that another did it. You get no more if you are found out. Logically, and with respect to immediate results, they are quite right. It has not yet entered into the heads of the residents of Palmiste that they might Christianize their servants. Certainly the specimens turned out by the missionaries are not encouraging. The converted Hindoo is, in most cases, precisely the kind of man that *no one* will employ; and though things may be better in those districts of Southern India which have been largely Christianized, I think that the least said about missionary labor among the Indians the better.

At the side of the house stretches its great garden, filled with all sorts of English vegetables, and all kinds of tropical fruits. Here are rows of pines which Covent Garden cannot hope to equal. There are too many for eating, and they are rotting on stalk. Here is an orchard of Letchi trees, the fruit that Warren Hastings tried to acclimatize in England, but failed. I would he had succeeded. Here are mangoes, with vanilla trained upon the trees. Here are custard apples, oranges, citrons, and guavas. Here, too, are strawberries, peaches, mulberries, and grapes. You may look, however, in vain for apples, pears, and such things. These grow not in Palmiste; and Englishmen, eating fruits more delicious far than these, grumble that they cannot get a pear, and would almost go back to England to get a plum.

In front of the house lies its lawn, — a broad, rolling piece of ground, set with flower-beds, mostly neglected, and planted round with rose-trees. Side by side with English flowers are others which remind you of greenhouses, Kew Gardens, and the Crystal Palace. They are not, however, so sweet as our own; and yonder bed of mignonette fills the air with a perfume far more delicate than any of the heavy-laden tropical plants. Here is a sensitive plant. Touch it: all the leaflets near your finger close, and shrink together in a kind of fear. Here is a gorgeous dracæna. You remember one like it in the Palm House. Here is a honeysuckle climbing up the wall of the house; and here, in heavy masses over the veranda, are creepers, which, if left unchecked, would climb over and embrace the whole house, and tear all down together.

My picture of still life must finish. Throw into the background a row of slender palms; put in, if you can, that glimpse to the right of a miniature gorge, some fifty feet deep; mark its tree ferns, tall and symmetrical, with their circled glory of leaves; throw in for light, the soft, white rays of a sun that wants yet half an hour of setting; let your air be warm and mild; let a breeze, cool and crisp, from the south-east, blow through the branches; while, from the camp of the Indians, not far away, imagine — for you cannot paint it — a confused murmur of tongues, cries of children, an occasional quarrel among the women, the monotonous beat of the tumtum, and the drone of the Indian story-teller. Then try to fancy that you have lived in all this so long that Europe with its noisy politics, and England with its fierce battle for life, and London with its fevered pleasures and bitter sorrows, seem all dreams of a former existence: that the soft lassitude of the climate has eaten into your very marrow; and that you no longer care to think, or to work, or to do any thing violent or in a hurry; that your chief pleasure is to sit at early dawn on the veranda, with a cigar; and see the day rise over the hills; or, at evening, watching the southern cross, and letting your thoughts roam here and there unchecked; your chief hope, — save at moments when a sickness for home comes on you, and a yearning for the life and vigor of England, — always to go on like this: to have no sickness, to feel no sorrows, to be tormented by no sympathy, to make no alteration or improvement, to dream life away, to eat the lotus day by day, in a land where it is, indeed, always afternoon.

CHAPTER III.

COME back with me ten years before my tale begins. We are still at Fontainebleau. It is a dark, dreary night in January, — cold, though it is the middle of the hot season. A fierce gale, to which the wind blowing about the trees is a sort of fringe or outside robe, is raging somewhere at sea. The rain falls at intervals in a continuous sheet of water; doors and windows are closed; and George Durnford is sitting alone in his dining-room, with an untasted bottle of claret before him, and a bitter sorrow at his heart. That morning he had followed to the grave the wife who but two days ago was alive and well. From a room close by comes the prattle of two children, in bed, but not yet asleep. To them the dismal ceremony of the morning was a pageant which conveyed no meaning. One of them has lost his mother; and he sits now on his little white bed, a great-eyed, fair-haired, solemn boy of two, with an uneasy sense of something wrong, and a growing wonder that the familiar hands do not come to smooth his sheets, and the familiar lips to kiss his good-night. The other, — a year or two older, with blacker hair and darker complexion, — in the opposite bed, is singing and laughing, regardless of the nurse's injunction to make no noise and go to sleep. He is Cousin Phil, and the little two-year-old is Arthur Durnford.

The baby voices do not rouse the lonely mourner in the room outside them. He sits musing on his brief three years of love and happiness; on the dreary scene of the stormy morning's funeral; of death and of sorrows that come to mar the brightest promise. He thinks of the day when he brought home his young bride, flushed with joy and hope; and of her cold waxen features when he took the last look at the fair face that had nestled at his heart. The hope and vigor of his life seem suddenly taken out of him; and he shudders as he remembers the long years to come, — perhaps thirty or forty, — alone in misery. For all sorrow seems to be endless when it begins; and, when the pain dies away into a sad regret, its very poignancy is remembered as a kind of evil dream.

The storm outside increases. Roused by the crash of thunder, he raises his head; and then, for the first time, he sees that he is not alone.

How long she has been sitting there, when she came in, and how, he knows not.

She is a young mulatto woman, not darker than many a black-haired woman of Provence, apparently about twenty years of age. Her jet black hair is rolled up in

a wavy mass. She holds her hat in her hand. Her dress is wet and draggled, but her hands are not rough. In her face, as she gazes steadfastly on Durnford, there is a look of mingled triumph and pity.

He starts with surprise.

"Marie! why do you come here? I thought you were in England."

She does not answer for a while, and then begins in a sort of slow, measured way — speaking English fluently, but with something of a foreign accent.

"Why do I come to-night, George Durnford? I think I came to triumph over your sorrow, because I heard about it in the town when I landed yesterday; but I heard things when I came along which forbid me to triumph any longer. Why should I triumph? You, who loved me once, would love me again if I chose. You, who deserted me for that good, dead girl — you see, George, I can be just — would, if I chose, take me again to be your plaything."

"Never," said Durnford. "Woman, can you not understand that a man can cease to do evil?"

"But," she went on, as if he had not spoken, "I do not choose. I will be no man's plaything. You taught me something, George. You taught me that a woman, to be what a woman should be, must learn many things. We, the daughters of a despised race, are good enough to be the mistress of an hour, but not good enough to be the companions of a life. We have our year of fondness, and think, poor fools, it will last forever. We have but one thing to give you, — our love. You take it, and trample on it. We have nothing but ourselves. That is yours; and when you are tired of the toy, you throw it away in the dirt. As I am only one of the many, — only a mulatto girl, — I ought not to complain. It has been my fate, and I accept it. Besides, you are a gentleman. Not every girl gets an Englishman for a lover. You were kind to me; you put ideas into my head; you taught me things; you made me feel, without meaning it, how great a gulf there is between your race and mine; and you showed me how to pass the gulf. You did more, not as a salve for your own conscience, because I suppose your conscience never pricked you about it; nor as a bribe for me to go away and never trouble you again — you gave me money on that day — the day before you married — when you bade me farewell. I used the money well, George. Even you will confess I used it well. I have been to your great city, — your big, cold, dreary London. I put myself to school there. I have learned all that a woman should learn, and more. Shall I play to you?"

Shall I sing to you? Shall I prove to you that even your cast-off mistress can be, if she pleases, as perfect a lady as — No, George, I will make no comparison. Adrienne, my mistress — my poor darling — whom I played with and loved, I shall never be like you!”

Durnford made an impatient gesture.

“I must say what I have to say. I want to say a good deal. Besides, it pleases me to talk. I have talked to no one since I left England, and you must listen. Don’t think, to begin with, that I love you any more. The poor, ignorant creature that trusted you, and thought herself honored by having your arm about her, is gone. George, she is dead. All that is left of her and her life is a memory and an experience, I remember, and I know. She could have done neither. She would have gone away, back to her own cousins, — the swine who live in the huts by the seaside, and scramble once a week for the wretched fish that will keep them till another week. She would have married some black clown, as ignorant as herself, and far more brutal, and would have brought her children up like their father. George, where is my boy?”

Durnford pointed to the bedroom door.

She snatched a light, and came back directly with little Phil, still asleep, in her arms — kissing and crying over him like a madwoman.

“O Phil, Phil! my darling, my darling! Could I leave you all alone? Speak to your mother, my son — my son! Will you never know her? Will you never be proud of her, and cling to her, and be good to her?”

The child opened his eyes, looked up sleepily, and then heavily turned his face from her, and was asleep again in a moment.

She took him back, and placed him again in his cot, and took the light, and looked long and steadfastly at the other. She returned, and sat down again, sighing deeply.

“Your child is mine, Marie,” said Durnford. “What I swore to you then, I swear to you now. He will be brought up like the other, educated with him, and shall share with him.”

“Will he never know the story of his birth?” asked the girl.

“It is my hope that he never will. He will be called — he is already called — my nephew. I told all to my wife. She had forgiven.”

“When you die, will he, or will the other, have this estate?”

Durnford hesitated. At last he looked steadily at her, and said, —

“My lawful son will be my heir. What

wealth I have shall be his. Your son will have a competence; but I will not — I cannot Marie — defraud my heir of what is his.”

Marie sat silent for a time.

Then she began to walk about the room.

“I am not myself to-night, George. I was angry as I walked here through the forest. I am only repentant now. The love for my poor Adrienne drowns the resentment that filled my heart an hour ago. I came to upbraid you — I cannot. Her spirit is in this house. I felt her breath as I leaned over the face of her boy. I saw her face as I came in at the door. I feel her here now, George. If I think more of her, I shall see her. I *do* see her! She is here — before me. Adrienne,” — she bent forward with streaming eyes and supplicating hands — “forgive me. Forgive the poor, passionate girl that never did you any harm, but whose heart has been filled with bitterness against you. You did not wrong me, my poor dear; and as for him who did — here, in your presence, I forgive him. George, for three long years, far away from here, among strangers, I have had but one prayer every night, I have prayed that misery might fall on you and yours. Adrienne, Adrienne, speak to me if you can. Give me some sign that my prayer was not answered. Let me go away at least forgiven.”

As she spoke, the hurricane swept with all its fury against the house. The wind howled like an accusing spirit. George rose from his chair, pale and trembling.

“Woman,” he cried, “you are answered.”

But as suddenly the wind dropped, and with one last effort blew back the shutter of the window. Durnford hurried to replace it; and, with the driving rain that came in, like tears of wild repentance, a poor dying dove was blown through the window, straight to Marie’s bosom.

“I am answered,” she said, folding the creature in her hands.

Neither spoke. Presently Marie fell on her knees, with the dove in her hand, and prayed aloud. Great tears rolled down Durnford’s face. When she had finished, he lifted up his voice and wept, saying, —

“God have mercy upon me a sinner.”

It was midnight. Marie rose from her knees, another Magdalene.

“I must go,” she said; “but first, George, aid me to carry out my plan of life. I am going back to London. I have got a great voice, — a splendid voice, George, — a voice that will bring me, they say, more money than I can spend. I shall save it for the boy. To make it useful, I must study and work. Let me have some more

money. I don't think it degrades me to ask it of you, does it? My real degradation no one knows over there. You must give me money, George."

He told her how he would help her in England, and give her what he had. They were both very quiet and subdued.

"I have seen you," she said, "and I have not cursed you. But, ah! my heart misgives me. I came through the lonely forest to-night, and heard sounds that mean misfortune."

"Marie, it is superstition."

"Perhaps. I cannot help it. It is in my blood. And a voice whispered in my ear, as I came along, that I should have no joy with my boy; and that you would have no more pleasure in life; that my fortune was to come, but my misery and punishment with it. George, was it no bad omen that my child turned away his face from me? Is it good to come to a house of sudden death and mourning? Shall I begin the world afresh with a brighter spirit for this night of tears and repentance?"

"You are shaken. Stay to-night. Take the child to sleep with you. In the morning you can go, if you will."

"No—now, now," she said. "I cannot stay here. Take care of him, George—take care of him. Some day, perhaps"—

"You cannot go through the forest to-night."

"I must—I cannot stay here. Farewell, George. I think I shall never see you again. Pray God to forgive us both. I will pray every day. They say God hears if you go on praying. And write to me sometimes to tell me of the boy."

They stood one moment, face to face. George took her hand; and then their faces met. There was no passion now, in that last embrace. The memory of the wife came between them like a spirit. They kissed each other, like children, in token of forgiveness and in self-abasement; and then, lifting the latch, Marie went out into the darkness, and disappeared.

George Durnford, lighting a cigar mechanically, went outside to the veranda. The Indian guardian, whose duty it was to make the rounds, and keep off nocturnal thieves, was coiled up in a corner, fast asleep. The storm had died away. A pure sky, bright with the southern constellations and with a clear half-moon, was overhead. George's eye fell on the cross of the south,—that heavenly sign that once filled the sailors with hope. He felt the warm, soft air of the summer night. Sitting down, he presently fell asleep. When he awoke the day was breaking; the mill

was lighted up; the day's work was begun; and he pondered in his mind whether he had not dreamt it all.

Little Philip, coming to him at six o'clock, began to ask who had taken him out of bed. And lying on the floor George Durnford found a handkerchief with the name of Marie on it. Then he knew that he had not dreamed this thing. And he kept it in his heart.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. ALEXANDER MACINTYRE used to describe himself, as a dingy card on Mr. Durnford's table testified, as Professor of the Classics and Mathematics, Instructor in Foreign Languages, Fencing, Fortification, Hindustani, and the Fine Arts. He was a most accomplished man. With the exception of the last-named department of learning,—which I fancy he inserted rather with a view to the effect and roundness of the sentence than with any intention of instructing in the Fine Arts,—he really knew, and could teach, the things he professed. He was not a Porson in Greek, but he made boys fairly good in Greek scholarship. He would not have become senior wrangler, but he knew a good lot of school mathematics. He could really fence; he could talk Italian or French or German with equal fluency; and he could and did swear horribly in Hindustani. Finally, on occasion, he talked about fortification as glibly as Capt. Shandy.

This great luminary of science was engaged for some years as private tutor to the two boys at Fontainebleau. He used to ride over on a little pony from his house, some two miles off, and ride back again in the evening. Sometimes when he staid to dinner, Mr. Durnford would leave him on the veranda, smoking and sitting in friendly proximity to the brandy bottle. Then it was the delight of the two boys—for Mr. Durnford had got into a habit, of late years, of going to his own room about nine o'clock—to observe their revered instructor drink tumbler after tumbler of brandy and water, getting more thirsty after each, and more rapid in his despatch of the next. At the opportune moment,—that is to say, when he was not too far gone,—they would emerge upon the scene, and engage him in talk. He would then make a laudable effort to give the conversation a philosophical and improving turn. Getting into difficulties, he would try to help himself out by another pull at the brandy; and when, as always happened, he got into fresh complications, he would fall back

in his chair, and make use of a regular and invariable formula. He would say, quite clearly and distinctly, "I am a Master of Arts of the University of Aberdeen—I'm the MacIntyre!" Then he would become speechless; and the boys, with a huge delight, would carry him neck and heels to bed. In the morning he would rise at six, and emerge with unclouded brow. Perhaps, in the course of the day, he would find occasion for a few remarks on temperance, with an excursus on his own moderation in spirituous liquors.

He was a small, spare man, in glasses, with sandy hair, a pale face, and a red nose. He lived by himself, in a little house of three rooms, two miles down the road. He had no pupils except the two Durnfords; and, at odd moments, an uneasy consciousness would seize him, that, when these went, he would starve. Nor had he any friends to help him. The voice of rumor, which aggravates a man's vices and subtracts from his virtues, said that he went drunk to bed every night. As to his antecedents, there were many reports. Some said that he had been in the army, but was cashiered for embezzlement while he was adjutant; others, that he had been a courier, a billiard-maker, all sorts of things. Rumor lied, of course. He had been none of those things. He had, after a laborious and meritorious career at Aberdeen, "gone in" for Scotch mission-work in Constantinople. Here he preached the gospel to the Jews, till he preached his belief away. This becoming known to his employers, he was turned out with ignominy. Then he wandered about the Levant, living no one knew how. After a few years, he turned up again in England, and became a lecturer to some society. Difficulties about the money ensued, and Mr. MacIntyre once more left his native shores. This time he came to Palmiste, with a letter to Mr. Durnford, and set up as a public teacher of every thing in the principal town. Troubles of all sorts fell upon him, and he removed to the other end of the island, partly to escape them, and partly to coach Mr. Durnford's boys. He had a way of introducing remarks—which at first appeared to be of the profoundest wisdom, and took in the unwary—with a magisterial and Aberdonian "obsairve." He was sententious and deferent. He had no morals, no principles, no self-will, no self-control. All his better qualities were wrecked on the quicksand of drink; and, of the hard-working, hopeful days of Aberdeen, nothing was left but the knowledge he had acquired, and a habit of industry which never deserted him. He was not, it must be confessed, the best tutor possi-

ble for boys; but education in Palmiste is difficult.

Mr. Durnford liked to keep his boys at home. There was less harm to be learned there, at all events, than in the hot, unhealthy town where the college stood. And even Mr. MacIntyre could teach them mere book learning. So they staid at home, and grew in years and stature.

In appearance they were as different as in manners: for Philip, the elder, was strong, sturdy, and overbearing; Arthur was slight, delicate, and yielding. If Philip wanted any thing, he always had it. Philip, too, wanted every thing. The best pony was his, the best dogs, the best gun. He was the cleverer,—the favorite with Mr. MacIntyre, sharp of tongue, and cool of temperament; but he was not popular. Arthur was. By his soft, feminine ways; by the gentle sympathy which he showed for all alike; by the kindly grace of his manner, which he inherited from his mother,—he won affection where his cousin only gained fear. The children ran after him when he walked through the village; the women came to him to adjust their differences; the Indians, when they had a petition to offer or a point to gain, which was nearly every day, waited till they could get hold of the chota sahib,—the little master. Philip, though he pretended to despise this popularity, was secretly annoyed at it. It rankled in his heart that he, for his part, commanded no man's affection. By degrees, too, as he grew up, he began to ask questions about himself. These his uncle put aside, quietly but firmly. And gradually a sort of feeling of inferiority took possession of him. There was something—what, he never guessed—that was not to be told him something that had better not be spoken of, something that made him different from his cousin. It was the germ of what was to grow into a great tree,—a tree whose fruit was poison, and whose very shade was noxious. But at this time it only stimulated him. It made him more eager to surpass his cousin; threw him with fresh vigor into his studies; and urged him to practise more and more the arts which he thought would lead to success in life. These—for the boy's knowledge of life was very small—he imagined to be chiefly skill at shooting and riding. He did both splendidly. Arthur did both indifferently.

Mr. Durnford seemed to take but little notice of their progress. Still, from a word here and there, they knew that he watched them. Nor could Philip complain, when his uncle gave him the best horse and the costliest gun that could be got in the island, that he was overlooked. There were few

times when the grave man conversed much with them. Sometimes, at breakfast, — that meal which means, in a planter's house, an early dinner at half-past eleven, when the work of the day, which has gone on for five or six hours, is more than half over, which is followed by two or three hours of rest and lazy talk, — he would relax, and tell them long stories of English life and youthful adventure, at which their faces were set aglow, and their hearts beating with excitement. Or he would set forth the perils of a young man's course; hiding little; letting them know some of the temptations that lie in the way of life; telling them something of the battle that lay before them; and — for George Durnford was now a religious man — backing up his pictures with a homily on duty. Surely there is but one thing needful to teach boys, — to do their duty; and one thing above all to train in them, — the power of will that will help them to do it. On Sunday mornings they would read the service of the Church, the three together, — Phil taking the first lesson, and Arthur the second. By this arrangement, the younger boy seemed to get all the teaching of Christ, and the elder all the passion and rebellious self-will of the Israelites.

Once a week or so they generally rode, the two boys together, but sometimes Mr. Durnford with them, to see Madeleine.

Madeleine, some three years older than Arthur, was the one thing that kept the boys alive to a sense of the social side of life. She, like them, was motherless; and, like them, lived with her father, M. de Villeroy, on a sugar estate, his property. She was everybody's pet and plaything, — a bright little black-haired beauty, whose laughter kept the house gay, and whose wilful ways were law. M. de Villeroy was one of those grand Frenchmen — some day we shall see them all in their proper place again — whose manners are the perfection of courtesy, and whose ideas chiefly date from a time when Louis the Sixteenth was king, or, to speak more truly, from a time when Francis the First was king. Not that his own birth dated from either of those reigns. He and his were colonists in Palmiste Island, from very early in the last century. The Marshal de Villeroy he spoke of as his cousin. He had the right, if he wished, to call himself marquis. He had a profound contempt for roturiers, and held that gentleman was a name that belonged to him by divine right; but he held, too, that the name involved duties, and truth, honor, and bravery, were the three points of his creed. For Christianity, I fear, that, like too many of his countrymen, he considered

it as an admirable method of imparting notions of order to the vulgar; and, though he would not openly scoff at it, yet, when alone with his friend Durnford, he would let fall such slight indications of a contemptuous toleration as almost justified the priests in calling him a Voltairean. Voltaire — or M. Arouet, as he preferred to call him — he always declared to be a man who had done an infinite amount of mischief; and he held all men of genius in equal dislike, from a persuasion that their mission in life was to prematurely popularize the ideas of the nobility. The Revolution, he would explain, was the work of men of genius. The ideas which they propagated had long been current among the more cultivated of the nobility. These, however, forbore to carry to their bitter end the logical consequences of their convictions. Nothing in social and political economy could be logical. All must be compromise. But what the Revolution took thirty years to achieve would, he maintained, have been accomplished by the liberality of the divinely appointed rulers of things in ten, without bloodshed.

"Obsairve," said Mr. MacIntyre, "Mirabeau was a gentleman."

To which M. de Villeroy replied, that Mirabeau's life was fatal to any kind of purity of action; and that, despite any alleged instances to the contrary, great things could only be done by men of pure life.

We must not, however, waste time on M. de Villeroy. He disappears directly out of the story. But he was one of the few influences brought to bear upon the boys' daily life. Mr. Durnford, with his high standard of duty and Christian honor; M. de Villeroy, with *his* standard of a gentleman's ideal; Mr. MacIntyre, alternately presenting the example of a scholar — various, if not profound — and the drunken, helpless helot; the ignorant, childish mass of Indians and blacks on the estate; and pretty little Madeleine, to keep them gentle, and give them that delicacy of feeling which only contact with the other sex can impart. Let us bear these things in mind, and remember, in the story to come, how ever so little an accident may mar the growth of the most promising tree.

The accident happened thus. Phil was now about fifteen, — a strong, handsome boy, whose dark, wavy hair, and slightly olive skin, were set off by a pair of bright black eyes and regular features, closely resembling those of Mr. Durnford. It was some little time, he could not himself say how it began, since the feeling had sprung up, that I have alluded to, of his own in-

feriority. As yet it was but an uneasy thought, sometimes dying away altogether, sometimes springing again full-grown into his brain. But it was there. He awoke this particular morning with it, and went out in the early dawn morose and sullen. Presently, when Arthur joined him, and they walked about with their arms round each other's necks in boyish fashion, the ghost vanished, and Phil became himself again. They got their ponies saddled, drank their coffee, and rode off to meet the tutor.

Presently they came upon him, plodding slowly up hill, on his broken-kneed Pegu pony, with his huge straw hat on, and his cigar in his mouth.

"Obsairve," observed the philosopher, as they turned to go back with him, "man's just the creature of habit."

He pronounced it "hahbit."

"So he is," said Phil, who immediately guessed that his instructor had been more than usually drunk the night before. "Somebody else has made that remark before you, Mr. MacIntyre."

"Don't take the word out o' the mouth o' the prophet of the — I mean your tutor, young man," said Mr. MacIntyre. "Man as I said, is the creature of habit."

They rode on in silence for a while, waiting further light from the sage.

This presently came.

"Of all habits that flesh is heir to," he went on, "let me caution you against intemperance. Whiskey, in my country, may be taken in moderation; brandy, never. You will obsairve that it furs the tongue, confuses the brain, and prevents that orderly sequence of thought inseparable from metaphysical study. Take the advice of one who has seen the world, young men; and, when you go into it, be careful to stop at the fourth or fifth tumbler. What is taken after that gives headache."

"Have you a headache this morning, sir?"

"Philip, your question pains me. It is true that I have headache, the result of eating imperfectly cooked steak last night. But your question, in connection with my warning and advice, might seem — I only say seem — to imply suspicion that I had been drinking last night."

"Not at all, sir," said Phil. "Steak is indigestible. Let me bring you a bottle of soda when we get in."

"Ye're a good lad," answered MacIntyre, "and I think I'll take it."

He took it, and they presently fell to their studies till breakfast. The day passed as usual till the afternoon, when the clatter of hoofs told the approach of visitors. They were Madeleine and her

father. The boys ran to help her off her pony, and they all three went off to the garden together.

Madeleine's favorite was Arthur; but Philip, as usual, wanted to appropriate her. Already the girl was conscious of herself. She took the usual feminine delight in being petted and caressed; and expected the homage of the boys with the air that seems to come naturally to beautiful women. She was born to be admired. Women who have that destiny accept it without any murmuring, and with no surprise.

Philip to-day, however, was cross-grained. He did not want her to talk to Arthur: he wanted to have her all to himself. Then they began to quarrel. It was a children's quarrel, that might have been ended directly but for a luckless remark of Philip's.

"Never mind, Madeleine," he said. "You can play with Arthur if you like; but when we grow up you'll marry me."

"Indeed I shall not," she said. "I am going to marry Arthur," and went and held up her face to be kissed by that blushing youth.

"Arthur!" said Philip with great contempt. "Why, I can turn him over as easy as — See."

He caught his cousin by the shoulder, and turned him round, throwing him off, so that he tripped and fell with his face to the ground. Arthur, however, rose to the occasion; and, springing up, struck him smartly in the face.

The battle lasted for a moment only, and Philip stood victorious. Madeleine ran to the rescue of her prostrate lover.

"Go away," she cried. "I believe what people say of you. I will never speak to you again."

"And, pray, what do people say?" asked Philip.

"They say that you are cruel and selfish: that you tease Arthur and vex him; and that you want to get every thing for yourself. Go away."

Philip went away. It was the first time the boys had struck each other. He was angry with himself, angry with Arthur, angry with Madeleine; and in this mood he strolled along till he found himself at the stables. Then he thought he would have a ride. Going into his own pony's box, he found the syce had not rubbed him down, or even touched him since the morning, and was now sitting — a tall, gaunt Indian of six feet — eating rice in perfect content. Phil's temper boiled over. He flew at the man in a fury of rage, kicking, striking, and cursing him. The poor groom was first appalled; and, standing up sideways to the wall, he lifted his leg, and covered his face with his arms, as some small protec-

tion against the blows. At last they became insupportable; and, in self-defence, he took the boy by the shoulders, and held him at arm's length.

Hindustani is gifted, above all languages, with a capacity of swearing. The power of insult is in no other language so great. Our own noble vernacular, when judiciously used, say, by the mate of an American sailing-ship, or an able seaman in our merchant service, can do a good deal; but its resources are miserable indeed compared with the strength and vivacity possessed by its sister branch of the Aryan family.

Phil had picked up this knowledge. He used it now, pouring out great volleys of insult — words which he had often heard, but never used before; terms which conveyed reproaches he did not understand — on the head of the offending groom. He, for his part, only looked scared; until, stung beyond all endurance, he pushed the boy back into the straw, seized the great wooden bar of the loose box, and brandished it over him, crying, —

“Bastard, I'll kill you!”

Phil looked at him, bewildered. Then, suddenly, he seemed to take in the whole force of the word; and instead of offering any resistance, or making any retort, he seemed to be suddenly crushed, and covered his face with his hands.

The groom put down the bar, and began to tremble. Then he furtively — something after the manner of a burglar on the stage — stole out of the stables. Between the stables and the nearest canes there was an open space, cleared for some purpose or other, of a quarter of a mile. Across this he sped, half doubled up, in long strides, and was lost in the canes.

Three weeks elapsed before he showed up again; then he was brought back, a monument of emaciation. He had been hiding in the forest, making predatory excursions at night to the nearest canes, and on these he had lived. The watchman apprehended him, and marched him in at daybreak, brandishing his long stick with an air of great importance and grandeur; the miserable prisoner, who was about two feet taller than his captor, slouching along after him. And when he came to the house, seeing Phil alone on the veranda, he fell, a mere mass of terror and despair, and grovelled before him. Phil kicked him up, and ordered loftily that he should be sent back to the stables.

But when he was left alone, he was, for the moment, stunned. Suddenly it all burst upon him. Without other evidence than the mere insult of the Hindoo, he knew it was true. The position he held in the house; the superior consideration in which

Arthur was held; the silence of his uncle about his own father, — all were proofs to him. He rose and came into the open air, as miserable as boy could well be.

Suddenly, however, another thought struck him.

Imagine that you have been brought up to believe — not by being taught in so many words, but by power of association — that there are two distinct races of mankind; that God has made one for mastery, and the other for subjection; that while it is your duty, as a sovereign, to rule wisely and mildly, you cannot but feel a certain amount of contempt — proportioned, of course, to your wisdom and mildness — for the governed race. Suppose you have gone on, being neither very wise nor very mild, till your contempt has become overweening, and your pride of race excessive. Then suppose, in the height of your arrogance, you hear suddenly that you are an impostor; that you belong to the race you despise; that you are nothing more nor less than one of the humblest of them. This was Phil's thought. Like the first, it was not a conjecture, but a certainty. Little as he knew of the wickedness of the world, he knew well enough that illegitimacy implied black blood: nothing else was possible in Palmiste. He thought, too, of his black wavy hair, his pale olive skin; and he moaned in his agony.

There was one more test. He looked at his nails. Beneath them was the blue stain that the African blood always leaves; and he gave up all hope.

Then he sat down and sobbed. It all seemed so cruel; it was so strange and so dreadful. The pride of life was gone. Nothing was left but shame and degradation. He crouched among the trees, and would have cried for death, had death occurred to him as even a remote possibility. He sat motionless, while the weight of his grief bent down his young shoulders.

As he sat there, the sun got lower. Presently it disappeared behind the hills. Long fingers of light came out, vibrating a sort of good-night to the world; and then it became dark. The darkness weighed upon him. He got up, and wandered out, thinking how he should go into the house, and found himself near the stables. There he saw some one with a lamp. It seemed as if the lamp was unsteady, shifting about like a light at a masthead.

After studying this phenomenon for a time, he went to discover its cause. I regret to say that he found his preceptor, Mr. MacIntyre, very drunk indeed, making shots at the stable door, with the view of getting out his pony and riding home to dinner.

He had been left alone all the afternoon, and finding a brandy bottle in the immediate neighborhood, had finished it, with these disastrous results.

Phil helped him to open the stable-door, and saddled his pony for him.

"Obsaive," said Mr. MacIntyre, "the mind of man, as you will find from a study of the Philosophy of the Condeetioned, has a tendency to — to" —

Here he fell over the bar that the groom had left behind him.

"Mr. MacIntyre," said Philip, "you're drunk again."

"Young man, no — no, young man. The curry at breakfast was prawn cu — curry. It always makes me so."

A thought struck the boy.

"Mr. MacIntyre," he said, "did you know my father?"

"Your father?" repeated the drunken scamp. "Of course I know your father. Misther Durnford's your father, and Marie's your mother — pretty little Marie." Then he began maundering on — "Pretty little Marie, pretty little girl — wouldn't speak to me."

"Marie — what Marie?"

"Marie — never had 'nother name. Went away — went away to England — died."

Philip turned away and left him; and presently he heard the pony, who knew his way better than his master, go clattering down the road.

He went in, washed and brushed himself, and appeared at dinner, pale and quiet. Madeleine and Arthur had it all their own way for once, for he never even contradicted them.

CHAPTER V.

TIME passed on. Philip said nothing of his discovery, only he became quieter. The boy of fifteen in a year changed into a tall, resolute young man, who might have been taken for two and twenty. The light mustache on his upper lip proclaimed his manhood. Boyhood grows more rapidly into adolescence under the hot sun of Palmiste; and his firm step and upright carriage announced one who, at any rate, seemed ready to make a fight for it.

He never, but once, alluded to his conversation with Mr. MacIntyre. But one day, after a long silence, Arthur being out of the way, he reminded the tutor of what he had told him. Poor Mr. MacIntyre was thunderstruck. He remembered absolutely nothing of it.

"Tell me," he gasped, his face becoming

fearfully red, — "tell me exactly what I said, Phil. Ah! Loard, what an evil spirit brandy is!"

Phil told him.

"I suppose it was true," he added carelessly.

Mr. MacIntyre rose, and went out on the veranda, looking round every corner to see if there were any listeners about. Then he opened every door, — there were seven in the room, — and looked in each chamber. No one was at hand, save in the dining-room. Here there were two of the Indian boys amusing themselves with a rude dramatic performance; for one had put on a pair of spectacles, and, with an empty bottle in his hand, was staggering up and down, like one who was well drunken, while the other looked on and applauded. Mr. MacIntyre himself wore glasses. He could not, of course, imagine that the representation was a description of himself; but, as a friend of discipline, he felt bound to inflict chastisement, and accordingly horsewhipped the one he caught, who had been doing nothing, and then he came back flushed with the exercise.

Sitting down again, and pouring out a glass of brandy and water, he sighed out, —

"Yes, Phil, it is true — more's the pity, my poor bairn! It's just awfu', the wickedness of the world. We fight against it, we philosophers; but we do awfu' little. It's quite true; but, Phil, no one knows it. I know it, because I brought you here, a wee bit thing of eighteen months, and told the folks you were Mr. Durnford's nephew; and Mrs. Durnford knew it, for her husband told her. Eh, she was good. There *must* be a heaven, boy, for some people, — if there's an after-life at all, which I varra much doot. We, who have had our backslidings, would not be comfortable in the same place with her and her life. They would have their own apartments. I sometimes think, Phil, I should be happier down below, near the bar."

"And no one suspects?"

"I sometimes think M. de Villeroi suspects. He's just a devil, that man. He finds out every thing. Last week he came to me, and told me that he'd found out how I had" —

"Well?" for the good man stopped.

"I think I'll take another glass, Phil. Yes, thank you. You were saying" —

"What became of my mother, then?"

"I don't know Phil. I can't tell you. She went away. Your father told me she went to England. Afterwards he said that she was dead. She was lady's maid, companion, humble friend, whatever you call it, to Mrs. Durnford before her mar-

riage; and remember, Phil, that she was the handsomest woman in the island. Hardly a touch of" —

"Stop!" shouted Philip, crimson — "stop, I won't hear it!"

The tutor stopped, and presently went away, seeing no further opportunity for philosophy or drink.

And for good reasons of his own, he forebore to inform Mr. Durnford of what had passed between himself and Phil.

But, one evening, Philip had a little conversation with his uncle, as he still called him.

"If you can spare five minutes, sir," he said one evening when Mr. Durnford had smoked his cigar, and was showing the usual signs of departure to his own quarters.

"Certainly, Philip what is it?"

He sat down to listen. Then Philip began, with considerable trepidation, but with a certain dignity of manner, to explain himself.

"You know, sir, that I am past sixteen?" Mr. Durnford nodded. "And I think you will allow me to ask you if my father, of whom you have told me nothing, gave me at his death any means of entering life. I have seen, sir, for some time, that there are points connected with our family history that you do not wish known to me. I shall never ask for information. My father, as you have told me, was in the army. I ask for nothing more. He was a gentleman, because you are a gentleman. That he did nothing to disgrace himself in the eyes of the world, I am sure."

"In the eyes of the world? No," said Mr. Durnford.

"That is all I wanted to have from your lips. Now, sir, am I a beggar? — that is, am I wholly dependent on you?"

Mr. Durnford did not answer for a few moments.

"I am glad, Phil, that this talk has been held between us. It must have come sooner or later."

"Why should it not come, sir?"

"No reason at all — none; only family business is always disagreeable. Let me tell you, once for all, that your father's money was placed wholly and unreservedly in my hands, for your benefit. I have done for your benefit what I could for you. You will be, at the age of twenty-one, the master of four or five hundred pounds a year. It is not much; but, with a profession, it is plenty."

"It will do, sir," said Philip. "I am glad it is so much."

"But what profession will you take? You are not a bookworm. The law would do little for you. The church?"

"Impossible!"

"Quite so, as I was about to remark. Then, what are we to do with you?"

"I shall go into the army, sir. At least, I can carry a sword."

"And use it, too, Phil, I think. We will talk about this afterwards." But they never did.

Early that year, while the hot rains of January were still soaking into the steaming earth, and the sun was vertical at noon-day, there was brought a rumor — vague at first, but too soon confirmed — that cholera had appeared in the principal town. Up to that day, cholera had been unknown. No scourge of pestilence had ever fallen on the island that insurance companies ranked rather higher than England, and on which they put a tropical percentage out of mere fun, and with the cheerfulness of men who are certain to make their money. Nobody ever died young, except from drink. Nobody read the lessons about the uncertainty of life as applying, even indirectly, to himself; and the very parsons had forgotten that life was ever any thing but threescore years and ten — fully told. So that, when men first heard that the cholera was come, they laughed.

There were various rumors as to its origin. One said that a captain of a coolie ship had put ashore, being then in quarantine, and, having spent the evening with four friends, had gone back at night to his ship; but the four friends died next day; and there was no one to tell whether the captain had left the ship or not, for all his sailors died.

Others said that it was produced by the shameful excesses of the Chinamen in pork. This was disproved by the fact that no Chinaman died of cholera at all. They went about in great glee, with mighty uplifting and pride of heart, rubbing their hands when they came upon some poor negro doubled up by the enemy that seized him so suddenly and killed him so easily.

Others, again, attributed it to the British Government. That malignant power — conscious for many years of the foe that threatened the island — deliberately, and with malice prepense, had left unguarded all the avenues by which it might enter. The editor of the most respectable paper, daring to say that the enforcement of the quarantine laws had been more rigid than usual of late years, was set upon, one starry evening, by a dozen public-spirited mulattoes, and horsewhipped. That is, they began to horsewhip him; but a soldier happening to come round the corner, slung his belt and dispersed them, devious, rapid-

ly flying. An account of the affair appeared in both the straw-paper organs next day, in which the brave assailants were held up to public admiration as patriots of the deepest dye. They were compared to Timoleon, to Brutus, to Harmodius, to Mirabeau, to Soulouque, to Oliver Cromwell, to Wilberforce, and to Toussaint L'Ouverture. They were to have been brought before the magistrate for assault; but he and all the officials of his court died of cholera, and the affair dropped. And, as the pestilence grew worse, men's hearts failed them for fear. The town of St. Denys had a population of some sixty thousand. These were dying at the rate of three hundred a day. All day long, and all night, the prisoners were kept at work digging graves, — not single graves, but long common fosses, fifty feet long and eight feet deep. There was no time to make coffins. As fast as the bodies were brought, the upper part of the shell in which they were laid was slipped out, and the sand covered them up. The priests — is there any fearlessness like that of a Catholic priest? — stood all day by the grave, chanting the monotonous funeral service, burials going on all the time. Now and then one of the grave-diggers would be struck down, and carried off, shrieking and crying, to a hospital. For if a black is once taken to a hospital, he abandons hope; and, should he come out again, is received by his friends — not with the rejoicing that would await one risen from the dead, but rather with such disappointment as greeted Martin Chuzzlewit when he came back from Eden.

The shops were closed; the wharves deserted; the streets empty, save for the frequent bearers of the dead. Most mournful of all was the absence of mourners. You might see a little procession slowly moving down the street — one big coffin and three little ones. Following them, not some young and stalwart mourner, not one whose life was still before him, but a poor old down-bent black, the grandfather of the little coffins, the father of the big one, hobbling sideways after the dead. Or if it was one who had lived long and in high esteem, his coffin would be followed by two or three out of the hundreds who counted him friend, and who, in better times, would have followed him to the grave, and pronounced a funeral oration over him.

Sometimes the closed shops never opened again at all; and then, long after the cholera had gone, the police would go at dead of night, or in the early morning, and execute their dreadful task.

Englishmen got together — they always

do in time of danger. I was once in a French ship with some half-dozen English passengers. One was the most foul-mouthed, blasphemous man I ever met — abaft the fo'c'sle, that is. We had very bad weather for a week. For one whole day we thought we should go down. Involuntarily we of Great Britain found ourselves grouped together by the davits, holding on. Quoth the blasphemer, —

"Since we are to go down, we English will stick together, and let the damned Frenchmen drown by themselves. Is there any fellow here that can say a short prayer?"

It was a dreadful punishment to him for his evil life, that he couldn't remember even the shortest in the whole Church Service; and I am, quite sure, so staunch an Anglican was he, that he would far rather have gone to the bottom with no prayer at all, than with any thing extemporaneous or irregular. Even the petition for rain would have comforted him.

However, in St. Denys, the English merchants sat together in each other's offices. They drank a good deal of brandy in those days, in little occasional nips, that touched up the liver if they did not keep off the cholera. No business was done of any kind, nor was there any pretence at it. No clerks came: these were mostly mulattoes, and kept themselves at home, with the shutters half-closed, sitting in a horrible circle in the dark, and with a fearsome fluttering at their hearts. If they perceived an internal rumbling, they took a dose of cholera mixture. If any one said he felt unwell, the rest sidled from him; and if one was actually seized, they generally all ran away. The doctor in charge of the hospital — he was not a Frenchman, nor was he English, and it would be invidious to proclaim his race — ran away from his post. He had a struggle of some days between fear and honor. At last, as the sick were brought in more thickly, honor lost ground. He fled: "L'existence," he said, "avant tout." It was an honest confession, and proved a sort of martyr's creed; for when he came back, after the thing was all over, and the hospital swept up again, clean and neat, he was astonished to find that the Government — British, of course — was taking a harsh view of the matter, and that he was kicked out in disgrace. The straw-paper organs made capital out of the event. The writer of one crushing article crammed for it, like Mr. Pott's young man. John Huss, the early saints of the Church, Savonarola, Cranmer, Sir Thomas More, and Louis the Sixteenth furnished illustrations for this admirable treatise.

Nostrums came into great use. Men, at other times supposed to be of sound mind, went about peppering their noses with camphor powder. Some swathed their bodies with flannel, and some wore as little as they possibly could. Some would, at intervals, apply cold ice to the backbone; others, warm water. Others, again, would breakfast off bitter beer and boiled eggs, and dine on brandy and water and soup. One man wrote to the paper, calling attention to the fact that few Englishmen died of cholera; and that, as he had recently discovered, the English colonists always washed, every morning, all over. This he recommended to his own countrymen, as a thing not, indeed, suddenly to be adopted, but to receive that serious attention and thought which the gravity of the step demanded. For himself, he confessed he sometimes washed his feet, but rarely.

One poor Briton nearly came to terrible grief. He was a mariner; and one evening, finding himself some miles from St. Denys, overcome with liquor, he fell down by the wayside and slumbered. Native policemen, coming by with a cart, gathered him up as one dead; and a grave being already prepared, they laid him in it, fortunately removing the shell. The English clergyman read the service, with sorrow for the poor fellow cut off so suddenly, whose very name was unknown, and who lay there, perhaps, to be looked for, many a weary day, by wife and children. He had finished, and they began heaving in the earth. As soon as it fell upon his face, the shock awakened him. Starting up, still unsteady, he began to bawl out, "Ahoy there! — ahoy!" The aborigines fled, howling in terror; nor would they ever accept any other version of the story than that it was a veritable post-mortem appearance, a spectre, that greeted them. And the churchyard is haunted by it to this day.

As for the sailor, he was taken home by the clergyman, and took the pledge, which he kept till he got to the next port. But he always swore he would never get drunk again in Palmiste.

They were not all cowards. Brave deeds were done. Foremost of all, the brave deeds of the divine Sisters of Mercy. If I die poor and alone, forlorn and deserted, may one of these ministering angels come to me with her sweet, unlovely face, and passionless tenderness of heart! Then may she make me a Catholic, or a Ritualist, or any thing she like, — all for dear memory of the things I have known her sisters do. For to them all duties are equally holy and equally divine. To them is nothing loathsome, nothing revolting; no form of disease or suffering too ter-

rrible to help; no accumulations of misery and poverty, no development of sickness, sufficient to keep them away.

Is it fair, without mentioning a living man's name, to mention his deeds? Perhaps he will never see it in print. This is what he did. In the height of the cholera, two coolie ships put into port, both with cholera raging on board. They were promptly sent off to quarantine off an islet — a mere rock, half a mile across — twenty miles away.

Thence, after some time, news came somehow to Palmiste that their apothecary was dead, and the captain, and all the English sailors but a few. And all the coolies were dying with cholera. Who would go there? One young army surgeon stepped out, so to speak, from the ranks. To go there was to go to certain death. It was a forlorn hope. There would be no one to help him, no one to talk to even; no one to attend *him* if he was seized. He went. For weeks he struggled with the pestilence, saving some from the jaws of death, and burying others. The place, which was a mere charnel-house, he turned into a hospital, — a *Hôtel Dieu*.

The poor, terror-stricken Indians slowly regained hope, and therefore health; and, when the evil time died away, he was able to bring back half at least of his flock, rescued from death.

It is a heroism that is beyond the power of any Victoria Cross to reward; and when it fires the blood, and sets the heart aglow of him that reads it, the doer of the geste has his fittest crown of glory, though he never hear of it.

In the country, away down at Fontainebleau, they were comparatively safe. Few cases happened on the estate in the earlier stage; but when it began to leave town it broke out in the country. Mr. Durnford took no precautions. In these matters he thought it was like a battle-field. You could not, he said, devise any armor against a cannon-ball.

"Obsairve," said Mr. MacIntyre, taking a nip of brandy, "some men are killed by a bayonet thrust."

But one evening, when Phil and Arthur came home from a stroll with their guns, they found MacIntyre in a state of wild alarm on the veranda. Mr. Durnford had been seized. No doctor had been sent for, because none was within twenty miles. They had no medicine, except brandy. Mr. MacIntyre had been giving him copious draughts. He had taken a bottle and a half without the smallest effect; and now Mr. MacIntyre, seeing the boys go into the bedroom, retreated to the other side of the house, and began to drink the rest

of the bottle, glad to be relieved of his charge.

There was very little hope. They sent off a dozen messengers for as many doctors; but, with the utmost speed, no doctor could arrive before morning.

All night long they watched and tended him. Mr. MacIntyre by this time, what with terror and brandy, was helpless. They could do literally nothing. But in the morning came collapse, and comparative ease. The dying man lay stretched on his back, breathing painfully, but conscious. Philip bent over him, and whispered, with dry eyes and hard voice, while Arthur was sobbing on his knees, —

“Father, tell me of my mother.”

Mr. Durnford turned his head and looked. He would have spoken; but a trembling seized his limbs, and his eyes closed in death.

He was buried the next morning. All the people on the estate went to the funeral. But Mr. MacIntyre was absent. For in the night a thought struck him. It was but a week since he had received, in hard cash, the half year's salary due to him. Now he saw his occupation gone. Without any chance of finding employment in the island, he would be left stranded. He was staggered at first. Then he reflected that no one knew of the payment except his late employer. How if he could get the receipt? So, when the funeral procession started, Mr. MacIntyre staid behind, — no one noticing his absence.

The house clear, he stole into the dead man's room. His desk was open, just as he had left it. Here was a chance which it was impossible to resist.

“It makes my heart bleed to wrong the lads,” said MacIntyre, wiping his eyes; “but one must consider one's self.”

Then he looked out the receipt from the file, and put it into his pocket. That done, he searched for the private account book, which also fell into his coat-tail pocket. Then it occurred to him that it would be an admirable thing to get a whole year's salary instead of a half, and he began to hunt for the previous receipt. This he could not find, though he searched everywhere. But he found something which interested him; and he wrapped it in brown paper, and took it also away with him. It was a big, fat book, with clasps and a small letter padlock, marked “Private.” He went down to his cottage, and cutting open the clasps, he read it from end to end.

It was a sort of irregular journal, beginning sixteen years before. It opened with a confession of passion for Marie.

“If this girl were but a lady, — if only,

even, she were not colored — I would take her away and marry her. Why should I not marry her? What difference does it make to me whether people approved of it or not?

“I saw Marie to-day. She met me in the garden behind her mistress's house. How pretty the child looked, with a rose in her black hair! She will meet me again this evening.”

And so on, all in the same strain.

In the leaves of the book were three short notes, kept for some unknown reason, addressed to his wife; but without date.

Mr. MacIntyre, in a fit of abstraction, took pen and ink, and added a date — that of Philip's birth. There was another paper in the journal: the certificate of marriage of George Durnford and Adrienne de Rosnay. He took this out; and, shutting up the journal, began to reflect.

In the afternoon, when the sun grew low, he went to the little Catholic church which lies hidden away among the trees, about three miles from Fontainebleau.

Just then it was shut up. For Father O'Leary, the jolly Irish priest, who held this easiest of benefices for so many years, had only lately succumbed to age; and, in the disturbed state of the colony, no priest had yet been sent down. The presbytere was closed, the shutters up, and the church door locked.

The tutor went to the back of the house; forced his way in with no difficulty, by the simple process of removing a rotten shutter from the hinges.

Hanging on the wall were the church keys. He took these, and stepped across the green to the vestry door, which he opened, and went in shutting it after him, whistling very softly to himself.

Then he opened the cupboard, and took down the two duplicate church registers of marriage. They were rarely used; because in that little place there were few people to get married except the Indians, who always went before the registrar. Turning over the leaves, which were sticking together with damp, — Father O'Leary was always the most careless of men, — he came to a place where one double page had been passed over. The marriage immediately before it was dated twenty years since; that after it sixteen. He looked at the duplicate register. No such omission of a page had occurred.

Whistling softly, he filled up the form between Marie — no other name — and George Durnford, gentleman, for a date

about a year before Philip's birth. Then he attested it himself, — "Alexander MacIntyre," — in a fine bold, hand; forged the signatures of the others; and added, as a second witness, the mark of one Adolphe. Then he rubbed his hands, and began to consider further.

After this, he got the forms of marriage certificates, and filled one up in due form, again signing it with the name of the deceased Father O'Leary. Then he replaced that one of the two books in which he had written the forgery, put the forged certificate in his pocket, and the other register under his arm; then locked up the cupboard.

When he had finished his forgeries he looked into the church. The setting sun was shining through the west window full upon the altar, set about with its twopenny gewgaw ornaments. He shook his head.

"A blind superstition," he murmured. "We who live under the light of a fuller gospel have *vara* much to be thankful for."

He went back to the presbytere, replaced the keys, and walked home with his register in his hands.

He had no servant, and was accustomed, when he did not dine at Fontainebleau, to send an Indian boy to the nearest shop to buy some steak, which he carried himself. He went into the kitchen, — a little stone hut built at the back of the cottage, — lit a fire of sticks, and proceeded to burn the register and Mr. Durnford's private journal.

The book would not burn at all, being damp and mouldy.

"At this rate of progression," he remarked, "I shall be a twal'month getting through them. Let us bury them."

He dug a hole in a corner close to his house, buried his books, piled the earth over them, and cooked his dinner with a cheerful heart.

"A good day's work," he murmured. "Half a year's salary gained, and the prospect of a pretty haul, if good luck serves. Marie dead, O'Leary dead, one register gone, the certificates in my possession. Master Phil, my boy, the time will perhaps come when you will be glad to buy my papers of me."

Mr. Durnford's death showed that he had become a rich man. All his property went by will to "my son," while of Philip no notice whatever was taken. Only the lawyer wrote him a letter, stating that by a special deed of gift, dated some years back, a sum of money was made over to him, which had been accumulating at compound interest, and had now amounted to five thousand pounds. This, at Palmiste interest, was five hundred pounds a year. As

his father had told him, it was his sole provision.

Philip's heart was stung with a sense of wrong. That no mention was made of him; that, through all his life, he had not received one word of acknowledgment or affection; that he had been evidently regarded as a mere encumbrance and a debt, — rankled in his bosom. He said nothing, not even to Mr. MacIntyre; who, now that he had no longer any further prospect of employment, began to turn his thoughts to other pastures: but he brooded over his wrongs; and now only one thought possessed him, — to escape from a place which was haunted by shame.

Arthur, too, wanted to go; and their lawyer and adviser took passages for the boys, and gave them proper letters to those who were to take care of them in England, till they were of age.

Mr. MacIntyre, the day before they started, came to say farewell. He had an interview with each of his pupils separately. To Arthur, by way of a parting gift, he propounded a set of maxims for future guidance, including a rule of conduct for morals, which he recommended on the ground of having always adhered to it himself; and he left his late pupil with a heavier purse, and consequently a lighter heart. Mr. MacIntyre, in all of his troubles, had never yet wanted money. As a Scotchman, he never spent when he could avoid spending.

His conversation with Philip was of greater importance. With much hesitation, and an amount of nervousness that one would hardly have expected of him, he hinted that he was possessed of certain information, but that the time was not yet arrived to make use of it. And then, biting his nails, he gave the young man to understand, that, if he ever did use it, he should expect to be paid.

"But what is your knowledge?" asked Philip; "and if you have any, why, in the Devil's name, don't you let it out at once? And how much money do you want?"

Mr. MacIntyre leaned forward, and whispered in his ear.

"Suppose my information proved your mother's marriage? Suppose that a man — I'm not for saying that I should be the man — brought all this to light?"

"Poor Arthur!" said Philip.

"That's not the point," urged the other. "To be plain. What would that information be worth?"

"I don't know."

"Should we say five thousand pounds?"

"You mean, that I am to give you five thousand pounds for giving information which you ought to give for nothing? MacIntyre you're a scoundrel?"

"Eh ! mon," replied the moralist.

"Can you give me these proofs ?" cried Philip, his voice rising.

"No, I cannot — not yet. And perhaps I never shall be able to do so. Whether I do or not, depends upon yourself. And don't be violent, Mr. Philip Durnford. Remember," he added, with a touch of pathetic dignity, "that you are addressing your old tutor, and a Master of Arts of the University of Aberdeen."

"Go to the devil !" said Philip, "and get out of this. Go, I say !"

I am grieved to say that Arthur, who was sitting outside, was startled by the fearful spectacle of his reverend tutor emerging with Philip's hand in his collar, and Philip's right foot accelerating his movements.

It was all done in a moment. Mr. MacIntyre vanished round the corner, and his pony's hoofs were speedily heard clattering down the road.

Arthur looked up for explanation.

"Never mind, old boy," said Philip. "The man's a scoundrel. He's a liar, too, I believe. Arthur, give me your hand. I have been worried lately a good deal ; but I won't wrong you ; remember that. Whatever happens — you shall not be wronged."

The next night they were steaming gallantly away. The headlands of Palmiste lay low on the horizon as the sun set, and touched them with his magic painter's brush.

Arthur took off his cap, and waved it.

"When shall we see the dear old place again, Phil ?" he said, with a sob in his throat.

"Never, I hope," said Philip. "It will be to me a memory of sickly sorrow and disappointment. Never. And now, old boy, hurrah for England and my commission ! I am going to forget it all."

He stood there with the bright look of hope and fearlessness that so soon goes out of the eyes of youth, and the sea-breeze lifting his long black hair, a possible — nay, a certain hero. It is something in every man's life for once to have been at peace with God, — for once to have thrilled with the warm impulse of true nobility.

those in that ancient hostelry, have the appearance of untidiness. Unlike most, they are clean and carefully dusted. The furniture is well worn, but comfortable, — easy chairs with bits of the padding sticking out here and there, and the leather gone in parts. The books are those of a man who regards binding less from an artistic than from a useful point of view, and is not careful to preserve their beauty, — in other words, the books are greatly battered. There is one table littered with papers : among them may be seen some in a girl's handwriting. One of the bookcases is filled altogether with books not often found in a bachelor's room, — children's books, books a little more grown up, and books of education. In the window-seat is a work-basket. On the mantle-shelf stands a glass full of violets. There are antimacassars on the worn old chairs and sofas ; and amid the general air of bachelordom, pipes, and lazy ease, there is, one feels, a suspicion of some younger element, the handiwork of a girl, — the breath of youth and grace, — in these rooms whose walls are so dingy, whose ceilings are so black, whose furniture is so battered.

The tenant of this room is Mr. Hartley Venn, who is now standing on the hearth-rug in the act of receiving his visitors. Of these, one is his old friend Lynn, of the Inner Temple, — a grave man, who seldom speaks and never laughs. He is sitting by the fire with a pipe in his hand, not yet lighted, stroking his heavy mustache. The other is our old friend Arthur Durnford, — a tall man now, of four or five and twenty, not long come up to town from Oxford : a man of slight proportions, and somewhat stooping shoulders. He wears his fair hair rather longer than most men, and a light fringe adorns his upper lip. A face of more sweetness than power ; a face which may command love and respect, but scarcely fear ; a face at which women glance twice in the street, because there are in it such vast possibilities of tenderness. He has not been a successful student, if you measure success by the schools. A second class rewarded his labors, it is true ; and Arthur retired content, if not greatly pleased, at the result. Success he did not greatly care for ; and he was too rich and too lazy to descend into the arena, and fight with other men. Poverty has its rights as well as its duties ; and among these is a prescriptive law, — often enough violated, — that the rich should keep out of the battle. Remember this, if you please, Messieurs the Archbishops, Prime and other ministers, Deans and dignitaries ; and next time you condescend to forward your invaluable, if prosy, contribu-

BOOK II. — AT HOME.

CHAPTER I.

HOME in England. It is ten years later on. We are in Gray's Inn, on a certain Saturday evening early in the year. The chambers where we are met, like most of

tions to current literature, reflect that they are taken — and would be taken, if they were bad enough to corrupt the taste of a whole generation — for the name that they bear. Then, be humble; or, better still, don't send the rubbish at all, — I mean the words of wisdom, — and let some poor penny-a-liner get the guineas. But Arthur Durnford's disposition led him rather to seclude himself, and to forget that, with all but a chosen few, life is a conflict. He was born for but one object, dilettante literature, — the investigation of the useless, the recovery of lost worthlessness, the archæological investigation of forgotten lumber; but of this, his high mission, he is yet all unaware, and is at present starting quite unconsciously in that road which will eventually lead him to distinction. For the rest, a heart as innocent and a life as blameless as any girl's, and, like that of most girls, a life as devoid of any active interest or any benefit to other people. Some men are born for this kind of passive life. Their years float along in a kind of dream, or among occupations which interest without exciting, and occupy without wearying. Well for them if, as with Arthur, accident has given them the means to gratify their inclinations.

Venn is the son of his father's old tutor, and therefore, he explains, a kind of uncle to him. And to-night is the first time they have met. Venn found out Arthur himself, from some Oxford friend and "information received."

"Durnford," he explains, introducing him to Lynn, "is my educational nephew. I am his tutorial uncle. That is, his father was a private pupil at the rectory, when I was six years old. Your father afterwards went to Palmiste Island, I believe; yes, and made a fortune there — by — by — doing those things and practising those arts by which fortunes are made, did he not?"

Arthur laughed, and said such was the case.

"Palmiste Island is of a more simple nature than London, Lynn; that is the reason why you and I, in spite of our merit, have not got money. Now that you know Mr. Arthur Durnford, we will proceed to elect him, if you please, an honorary member of the Chorus."

The ceremony of election gone through, Arthur took an easy chair, and Venn proceeded to put bottles and glasses on the table. Then he took up a position on the hearth-rug, and, with his coat-tails under his arm, turned to Lynn.

"The preliminary oration, Lynn?"

"You make it," said Lynn, who had by this time lighted his pipe.

Venn bowed solemnly, and put on an air of great meditation, stroking his mustache. Presently he began, —

"It is customary, at the election of a new member into this society, to instruct him in the nature of the duties and responsibilities he is about to undertake. In the mysteries of the Cabeiri" —

"Pass two thousand years," growled Lynn.

Venn bowed gravely.

"In deference to the opinion of my learned brother, I pass to modern times. In the mysteries of Freemasonry, it is popularly supposed that the candidate for admission is put to bodily pain before receiving the terms of an oath so tremendous that the secrets of the craft have remained undisclosed from the time of Solomon, and Hiram, King of Tyre, to the present moment. The fraternity of the Chorus heats no poker, and administers no oath; and one penalty only awaits the offender, — we expel him."

"Was any one ever expelled?" asked Durnford.

"One, sir, was only last week expelled for levity. His name was Jones. Jones, at least, will never more be privileged to sit in the Chorus."

Here a loud knock was heard at the door. Lynn opened it. It was Jones.

The orator, no way disconcerted, shook hands with the new arrival with a greater show of delight than his words absolutely warranted, saying, as he pushed him into a chair, —

"Why do you come here, man void of shame? Did you not distinctly understand that you were never to appear again on Chorus nights?"

The new-comer, who was a smooth-faced, bright-eyed little man in glasses, sat down, and immediately began to twinkle.

"I come as a simple spectator," he said. "I cannot keep away."

"From sport to sport, concealment's guile
Preys on this heart of mine;
And, when the worm provokes a smile,
I drown the grief in wine."

"Why," said Venn, "he is positively doing it again! Miserable man! was it not for this we expelled you?"

"It was," said Jones with a groan. "It is chronic. I am truly wretched."

"Silence, then; and you, young candidate, listen. The Chorus was established ten years ago as a refuge for the unsuccessful. It was intended to answer the purposes, in a small degree, of a literary and artistic club, — admitting, however, only those professional unfortunates who can achieve no success. It is a club of the unfortunate.

When fortune comes to one of us, he shakes his wings, and goes. We who remain wrap ourselves in the cloak of poverty and neglect, and meet mischance with smiles. Of the original twelve who formed the first brotherhood, there remain but Lynn and myself. We do not care now greatly to enlarge the circle. Jones, here, was admitted five years ago. He is but a chicken in disappointment, and has only just begun to wait. I have already told you that he was expelled, and why."

"Not," said Jones solemnly —

"Not for a crime he did, nor 'cause
He broke their own or nature's laws;
But for a simple trick he had
Of quoting what he learned and read."

Arthur began to feel as if he were standing on his head. The other two took no notice of the interruption.

"Society takes no heed of these unfortunates. They are legion. They occupy that middle ground which is above a small success, and cannot achieve a great one. Lynn, here, would scorn to be an Old Bailey barrister. Yet he could do it admirably. He goes in for Equity, sir, and gets no cases, nor ever will. Jones, I am sorry that you *must* be excluded. Jones, amongst other things, makes plays. No manager has yet put one on the stage."

"The manager of the Lyceum is reading my last play now," said Jones.

"He always is," said Venn. "I am, for my own part, a writer. I write a great deal. Some evening, when Jones is not here, I will read you a portion of my works."

"Pray," said Jones, "why not when I am here?"

"Because," said Venn, "the last time I read you an essay you fell fast asleep."

"I did," said Jones; "so did everybody."

"I have, at times, offered my productions to editors. They invariably refuse them. Under these circumstances, I retire into myself, and put together the *Opuscula* which will one day be eagerly bought by an admiring public. On that day Lynn will be made Lord Chancellor, Jones will get a play acted which will run for three hundred nights, and the Chorus will dissolve."

"You are to understand, then" — after a pause, during which Jones pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped his eyes in grief at the prospect of dissolution — "that we meet here weekly between the 1st of October and the 1st of April. During the week and in the summer vacation, we make observations which are afterwards communicated to the Chorus. Thus we form a running commentary on passing events, which will contain, when published, an

admirable collection of maxims calculated both to inform and instruct. They are chiefly of a moral tendency. Excluded by our misfortunes from taking an active part in the drama of life, we stand by and remark. We are mostly resigned to our position. Some, however, aspire. Dolphin, for instance — you remember Dolphin, Lynn?"

He grunted.

"Observe the dissatisfied air with which Lynn receives that name. Dolphin aspired. He now edits 'The Daily Gazette,' and pays a fabulous income tax. Of all the excellent remarks that have been made in this room, Dolphin's were the poorest. Waterford, too, another instance. He now leads a circuit. Jones, what are you pursuing up your lips about? If you have any thing to say, get rid of it."

"I was thinking of Tennyson's lines," said Jones, with great softness of manner.

"'Prate not of chance — the name of luck
Is blown the windy ways about;
And yet I hold, without a doubt,
He prospers most who has most pluck.'"

"Are those Tennyson's words?" asked Durnford, taken off his guard.

"You will find them in the two hundred and fortieth page of 'In Memoriam,'" said Jones readily. "The stanza begins with the well-known lines, —

'Balloon, that, through the fleecy rings
Of bosomed cloud and mottled sky,
Floatest athwart the wondering eye,
A winged eagle without wings.'"

"And this creature," said Venn, "aspires to be a dramatist. Let me finish. The one unfailing rule, which is alone incapable of being rescinded, is the rule of success. Any man who succeeds is turned out. *Ipso facto*, he ceases to be a member of the association. Success is of all kinds, and we admit of no excuse or palliation — the offender goes."

"How if he write a book which does not sell, but is yet praised?"

"He may, when his failure is quite established, remain with us. More — we allow him to be damned any number of times. Jones's works, for instance: his novel" —

Here Jones visibly blushed.

"It was really very bad, and no one took the least notice of it — not even the reviewers. Did any one buy a copy, Jones?"

"I believe," he said, "that there are still a few copies on the publishers' shelves. These can be had now at a reduction. The published price was thirty-one shillings and sixpence."

"Your poems, Jones?"

"My poems," said the bard, "were not meant to be sold: I *give* them to my country."

"It is very liberal of you. I will presently detail my own experiences of failure. Suffice it now to remark that I have never succeeded in anything. You will find in me, sir, as my friends have already found in me, a very Tupper in *posse*. I am the representative man of mediocrity — am I not, Lynn?"

The grave Lynn nodded.

"You say so."

"I will now give you — as Jones is not wholly acquainted with my fortunes, as Lynn is a good listener, as you ought to know something about me, and as it gives a sort of early Bulwer-Lytton, or even a Smollett-like air to the evening's talk — a brief sketch of the career of an unsuccessful man. Jones, will you kindly undertake the bottle and jug department? Lynn, be so good as to put the kettle on. Durnford, my dear boy, take tobacco, and help yourself to drink. Claret is there, which I do not recommend. That bottle of champagne is remarkable for its age. It is coeval with the Chorus. Ten years have passed since it left its native public. It is not to be opened, but stands there for respectability's sake. There is port, if you like: it is not good. Sherry is in the middle bottle. You can open it, if you please; but I should not advise you to do so. The bottled beer I can strongly recommend, and the Irish whiskey is undeniable. Jones, you rhyming wretch, what will you take? Lynn, I have your permission to talk tonight."

"Stop!" said Jones. "Have you got anything to say before he begins, Lynn? Have you, Durnford? This is your only chance. For my own part, I can only say, with the poet Wordsworth, —

'Not the whole warbling grove in concert heard,
So gladdens me as this loquacious bird.'

"Proceed, Venn," said Lynn, "and quickly; for Jones is bubbling with another quotation."

"I will try not to be tedious. I began life rather well, for I got into Eton as a collegier, and actually gained a considerable quantity of prizes. I also learned to wear my hat at the back of my head, to despise trade, to run bills, to make Latin verses, to regard science and mathematics with a proper and reasonable contempt, and to consider Eton as the apex of civilization, ancient and modern. So far, I resembled other boys. Occasionally I was flogged. And I very early formed the germ of that grand idea which I have since made the subject of an admirable essay."

Jones wagged his head solemnly; whether from admiration, envy, sympathy, approval, or some other emotion, was never known.

"It is that all the mischiefs of the world are due to the insufficient manner in which boys are flogged. Some, sir, I am ashamed to say, are never flogged at all. Jones, you were never flogged."

"I was not," said Jones. "If it is any extenuation of my master's crime, I may mention that he often caned me."

"I knew it," Venn returned, with an air of triumph. "There are subtle influences about the older and more classical instrument. It produces an effect which, in after life, is only to be detected by those who have made an early acquaintance with it. Caning is merely a brutal mode of inflicting fear and pain. The poetry of punishment is in the birch. The actual performance, I admit — the mere physical process, either active or passive — affords little food for reflection; but when I think of the effects upon the sufferer, I am carried away, gentlemen, effor. There is the anticipation, so full of tumultuous fears and hopes, with its certainties as to the future fact, and its uncertainties as to vigor and duration; its bracing influence of the volition, its stimulating effect on the fortitude, its cultivation of patient endurance. All this, my friends, is truly poetical. Consider, next, the after-glow. The after-glow is, indeed, a magnificent combination of sensations. Nothing that I can remember to have experienced comes near it. It lingers like the twilight; and, like the summer twilight, it lasts all night. It warms like the memory of a good action, or the blush of conscious virtue. It is as soothing as the absolution of a bishop. It removes as many cares as a confession, and it wipes off sins like a pilgrimage."

He paused for a moment, and looked round. There was a murmur of applause, Jones rubbing his leg with a painful air of sympathetic abstraction.

"Let us go back to Eton. I was in the sixth, and stood well to get into King's. Unfortunately, the vacancy that should have been mine came too late by half an hour. I had till twelve on my last day, and a messenger bringing news of a vacancy arrived, having loitered on the way, at half-past twelve. The man, gentlemen, died young. I say nothing about Nemesis — I merely ask you to observe that he died young. So I went to St. Alphege. You, Lynn, were at the same time at Trinity. At St. Alphege's, which is not a large college, we passed our time in intellectual pursuits which were not among those encouraged by the Senate. This body, Durnford,

which resembles a similar institution at Oxford, having, after long consideration, found out the most useless branch of science and the least useful method of studying classical literature, has fixed upon these as the only means of arriving at any of the University distinctions. I could not do mathematics, as I have said; and, as they would not let me take classical honors without knowing how to graduate the common steelyard, and such useful scraps of knowledge, I was fain to go out in the Poll. Sir, if it had not been for the invention of that infernal steelyard—an instrument which I have never seen, and never had the least necessity or desire to graduate,—I should this day have been a Fellow of St. Alphege's.

"Having failed here, I returned home. I found my family in some little confusion. My brother Bob,—you have met Bob, Lynn?"

Lynn nodded.

"An excellent fellow, Lynn,—most good-hearted man, though he had his faults,"—here Venn rubbed his nose meditatively. "Bob had just taken a stand. He announced resolutely, and without any chance of misunderstanding, that he was never going to do any more work. The line he took was this. He said, 'I am not clever enough to get money. I am clever enough to look at other people getting money. Perhaps a life of contemplation, for which I am evidently intended, will lead to greater results than a life of work. I simply, therefore, say to the world in general, and my family in particular, Keep me. Give me a sufficiency to eat and drink.'"

"And how did the world receive this demand?"

"That very small portion of the external world that ever heard it declined to interfere. But out of my father—who, though quite unable to see Bob's logical position, could not let him starve,—he got a sufficiency to eat, and more than a sufficiency to drink. However, Bob having taken this unexpected line, I had to keep myself; and did, after a fashion, till Bob and my father died. Poor Bob! You remember him, Lynn, coming out of the Crown, with his elbows squared, quite drunk, and arguing with the policeman? Admirable traits of character were in that man. His wife allowed him a shilling a day, and his whole study latterly was how to make the most of the money. It went in six drinks; and each drink involved a pipe and an animated discussion in the tap-room. Bob, you see, miscalculated his forces. He had not the physique to stand up against a long course of leisure, and he succumbed. When he died, at the early

age of thirty-five, he sent for me, and made over to me, with his usual kindness and thoughtfulness of heart, all he had to give me,—the care of his wife and boy.

"At this time, I was working for a living,—never mind how,—I got it, but only just got it. Every attempt that I made to do any thing better for myself failed. I had no energy, they said; or else no perseverance, or no luck, or no determination, and so on: you know the kind of talk. The fruits of life turned, when I touched them, to Dead-Sea apples. Then I complicated matters by falling in love."

"Did you?" said Lynn. "I never knew that before."

"Yes, I was in love. Oh, yes! for some months before I ventured to speak, and for some months after."

"What did she say?"

"She said, 'No,' in a very decided and resolute manner. I did not so much mind that, as I did the way in which she behaved afterwards. I made then the discovery that there is nothing in the world which more puffs out and inflates a woman with pride, than the fact, that she has had the heroism to refuse a man. For at least three months after my rejection, there was the mightiest feminine clucking ever heard about it. Her strength was overtaken, they said; and all the family went to Madeira with her. No one asked after my strength; and I staid in London, and was regarded as a sort of involuntary murderer."

"Did she die, then?" asked Lynn.

"Oh, no!—not at all. She came back, very fat. She is in London now; still unmarried, and likely to continue so. It may sound uncharitable; but, in the interests of husbands, I do hope that such a model of womanly heroic virtue may never be married."

"I also," said Jones, "have had my share of blighted affections."

"Have you, too, been in love?" asked Lynn.

"I have," sighed Jones. "A most unfortunate attachment,—an impossible attachment. Yet the dream was pleasant while it lasted."

He held his head down, blushing modestly, and went on, in a broken voice,—

"As a boy—slopes—Windsor—one of the princesses. Not my fault originally—mine to nurse the passion."

"Which was it?"

"The prettiest, sir."

"But how, when, where could *you* speak with the princess?"

"We never interchanged words; but the eye spoke—at seventy yards. Poor

thing! she's married now. I hope she got over it. I did after a time."

Venn, bearing the interruption with an air of sufferance, resumed his history.

"Getting over my love difficulties, I resolved to fall into love no more, and went out of society. I have kept out ever since; and, on the whole, I prefer being out. Then I began to write; and the real story of my failure begins. You see, I was not absolutely obliged to do any thing when my father died, but I fondly hoped to make literature a staff. It has never been to me even a reed. I had, of course, faint glimmerings of success, gleams of hope. Every time Tantalus stoops to the water, he fancies that this time, at least, he will reach it; and I think that every now and then he gets a few drops—not enough to quench his thirst, but enough to revive hope. My gleams of success were like that poor convict's drops of water. They led to nothing more. I fancy every editor in London knows me now. They say, 'Oh! here's Hartley Venn again;' and I go into the rejected pigeon-holes. So complete is my failure, that even my own people have ceased to believe in me,—so complete, that I have ceased to believe in myself."

He paused; and, mixing a glass of whiskey and water, drank half of it off.

"You will remark—proceeding on the inductive method—those whom God destines to fail, he endows with excellent spirits. Jones is a case in point"—

"Why should sorrow o'er this forehead
Draw the veil of black despair?
Let her, if she will, on your head;
Mine, at least, she still will spare."

This was Jones's interruption.

"I am, also, myself a case in point. Lynn is not, which is one reason why I fear he will some day desert me. My own equable temper is not, however, wholly due to birth—partly to circumstances. You will understand me, Lynn, when I explain that when quite a little boy I used to sleep in the same bed with my brother Bob."

"Not the least in the world," observed Lynn.

"Dear me! The way was this. We had a wooden bed against the wall. Bob gave me the inside, and insisted on, my lying quite straight on the edge, while he rolled up in the middle. By this arrangement, I got the wood to sleep on, and the wall to keep my back warm, with such small corners of blanket as I could wrest from Bob as soon as he went to sleep. If immediate effects led to open repining, I incurred punishment at once. I learned a lesson from Bob, for which I have never ceased to thank him, in resignation—

cheerful, if possible—to the inevitable. Whenever, as happened to me this morning, I get a MS. sent back, I say to myself, 'For this were you prepared in early life by the wood and the wall.'"

Quoth Jones readily,—

"You remember, of course, those lines in Bunyan, quoted, I think, by Lord Willbewill? Observe the Bunyanesque turn of the second line, with its subtlety of thought:—

'He that is down may fear no fall;
The monk may wear his hood:
Give me, for moral warmth, the wall;
For moral bed, the wood.'

It was the answer to a riddle asked by the prince at the banquet given when Mansoul was taken, and Diabolus evicted. It follows the conundrum of the Red Cow, and is omitted in some editions."

"Thank you very much," said Venn, not smiling. "I have only one or two more observations to make. The curious in the matter of unsuccess may consult, if they think fit, my unpublished Opuscula. They will find there, clearly set forth, the true symptoms of an unsuccessful man. Thus, he may be known—not to be tedious—first, by his good spirits, as I have said; secondly, by his universal sympathy; thirdly, his extraordinary flow of ideas; fourthly, by a certain power of seeing analogies; and fifthly, by his constantly being in opposition. At all times he is a heretic. The mere fact of a thing being constituted by authority is sufficient to make him see, in more than their true force, the arguments on the opposite side."

"You remember," interrupted Jones, with a sweet smile, "the lines of"—

"Stop, Jones," cried Venn, "I will not endure it. Lynn, I have finished. We will now, gentlemen, talk of general topics."

They talked, as usual, till late in the night. It was past three o'clock when Venn said,—

"This reminds me of a passage in my essay on 'The Art of Success.' I will read it you. The night is yet young. Where are the Opuscula?"

They looked at each other in dismay. Venn searched for the essay everywhere; not finding it, he remembered that he had taken it to bed with him the night before, and went into the next room to get it. When he returned, with his precious paper in his hand, the room was empty, and there were sounds of rapidly retreating footsteps on the stairs; for all had fled. He shook his head in sorrow rather than in anger, and, looking at his watch, murmured,—

"A general exodus. They have left the

Desert of the Exodus. Past three o'clock ! An hour's sleep before daybreak is worth three after it. Shall I have my beauty sleep? No: the cultivation of the intellect before all. Hartley Venn, my dear boy, had you always borne that in mind you would not now be the wreck you are."

He sat down and read, with an admiring air, the whole of his long paper from beginning to end. Then he gave a sigh of contentment and weariness, and went to bed as the first gray of the spring morning was lighting up the sky.

CHAPTER II.

HARTLEY VENN—whose account of himself to Arthur was, on the whole, correct—is at this time, a man of eight and thirty. In the course of his life he has tried a good many things, and failed in every one. He possesses a little income of between three and four hundred a year, comfortably housed in consols, where he allows his capital to lie undisturbed, being as free as any man in the world from the desire to get rich. He is by actual profession a barrister, having been called twelve years ago, at Lincoln's Inn. But as he has never opened a law-book in his life, or been inside a court of justice, it may safely be asserted that he would have great difficulties to encounter in the conduct of any case with which a too credulous solicitor might intrust him. Friends anxious to see him "get on," once persuaded him to buy a partnership in an army coaching establishment, the previous proprietor retiring with a large fortune. All went well for a year or two, when, owing to some of their pupils never passing, and both himself and his partner being hopelessly bad men of business, they found themselves, at the beginning of one term, with two pupils to teach. Naturally the affairs of the institution got wound up after this, Hartley being the loser of the fifteen hundred or so which he had invested for his share. Then it was that he retired to Gray's Inn, and took those chambers where we now find him. He then became, as he was fond of calling himself, a literary man, that is, he began that long series of *Opuscula*, of which mention has already been made. They were never published, because editors invariably declined to accept them: no doubt they were quite right. He was full of reading and scholarship,—full of ideas; but he never acquired that way of putting things which the British public desires.

He disliked revision, too, which bored him; and he had a habit of reading his own things over and over again till he got to know them all by heart, and their very faults appeared beauties. To some men a censor is absolutely necessary. I have often thought of setting myself up as a professed literary adviser, ready to read, correct, suggest, and cut down, at so much per page,—say ten pounds. He had a sort of uneasy consciousness that life would pass away with him without bringing any sort of kudos to him; and though, from force of habit, he still kept note-books, and covered acres of paper yearly, he had begun to look upon his works as precious private property, written for his own recreation and instruction,—a treasure-house of wisdom for those years of old age when his ideas would begin to fail him. There are hundreds of men like him. Reader, thou who hast never looked over a proof-sheet, are there not within thy desk collections of verses, sheets of essays, bundles of tales, which it is thy secret pleasure to read and read, and thy secret hope to publish? Deny it not. We, too, have had this time; and there is no such delight in reading the printed page—especially when the world has received it coldly—as in gloating over the glorious possibilities of the manuscript. What is the miser's joy, as he runs his fingers through the gold, to the young writer's, as he sits, door locked, pen in hand, as modest over the tender fancies of his brain as any young girl at her toilette over her charms?

Venn is a smooth-faced man, with a bright, fresh cheek,—in spite of late hours,—and a light mustache. His hair is perfectly straight; and he shows no signs of getting gray like Lynn, or bald like Jones. His face is long, with a somewhat retreating chin,—sign of weakness,—and a long drooping nose,—the melancholy and reflective nose. He is not a tall man, and his shoulders stoop somewhat. He has still an air of youth; which I think will never leave him, even when his hair is silvery white. And his expression is one of very great sweetness: for he is one who has sympathies for all. They talk of him still at the butteries of his old college, where, in his hot youth, he played many a harmless frolic in his cups, and where he endeared himself to all the servants. Indeed, it was no other than Hartley Venn who bearded the great Master of Trinity himself on that memorable night when, returning unsteadily from a wine, he accosted the doctor leaving the lodge, and there and then challenged him to a discussion on the nature of Jupiter's satellites. It was he, too,—but why recall the old stories? Are they

not chronicled at the freshman's dinner-table, handed down to posterity like the legends of King Arthur? The waiters at his favorite places of resort regard him as a personal friend. They whisper secrets as to the best things up; hide away papers for him; tell him even of their family affairs; and sometimes consult him on matters of purely personal importance. It was through Hartley, indeed, that I first conceived the idea that waiters are human beings, with instincts, appetites, and ambitions like the rest of us. It is really the case. And at the British Museum, such was the esteem with which the attendants—he knew all their names, and would ask after their wives and families—regarded him, that he used never to have to wait more than an hour to get his books. And this, as every one who uses the reading-room knows, is the height of civility and attention.

An indolent, harmless, good-hearted man, who could not run in harness; who could do no work that was not self-imposed, and who did no work well except the self-imposed task at which he had been laboring for twelve years,—the education of his little girl.

Everybody in the inn—that is everybody connected with the administration of the place—knew Laura Collingwood. Everybody, too, felt that the production of so admirable a specimen of the English maiden reflected the greatest credit on all parties concerned,—on the benchers, the barristers, the students, the porters, and the laundresses; but especially on Mr. Venn.

It was about twelve years before this time, when Venn first took his chambers, and in the very week when Mrs. Peck, his laundress, began her long career of usefulness with him, that he found one morning, on returning from the Museum, a little child, with long light hair, and large blue eyes, sitting on the steps in the doorway of his staircase, crying with terror at an evil-eyed, solemn old Tom cat, who was gazing at her in a threatening manner behind the railings. Unwashed, dirty, badly dressed, this little rosy-cheeked damsel of six touched Venn's soft heart with pity, and he proposed at first to purchase apples; a proposition which he carried into effect; and leaving her with a handful of good things, proceeded up stairs with a view to commit to paper some of those invaluable thoughts which were seething in his brain. Presently, to his astonishment, the child followed him up like a little terrier, and, sitting down gravely upon the hearth-rug, began to talk to him with perfect confidence. Thereupon he perceived that here was a new friend for him.

"What is your name, absurd little animal?" he asked.

"Lollie Collingwood."

"And who are your amiable parents, Miss Lollie Collingwood, and what may be their rank in life? Where's your mother, little one?"

"Mother's dead."

"Father too?"

"Got no father. Grandmother told me to sit still on the steps. Only the cat came. Here's grandmother."

Grandmother was no other than Mrs. Peck herself. Later on, she explained to Venn that her daughter, who had left her to go into service, and was a "likely sort o' gal" to look at, had come back to her the year before with the child.

"Said her name was Mrs. Collingwood. Said her husband was dead. Oh! dear-a-dear-a-me! Said he was a gentleman. And here was the baby,—great girl-already. And then she pined away and died. And never a word about her husband's relations; and the child for me to keep, and all. And bread's rose awful."

Hartley took the child on his knees, and looked at it more closely. As he looked, thinking what a sad lot hers would be, the little girl turned up her face to him, and laughed, putting up her lips to be kissed with such a winning grace that Hartley's eyes ran over.

"I'll help you with the child, Mrs. Peck," he said; "don't be afraid about it. Will you be my little girl, Lollie?"

"I see your little girl now," said the child. And they gave each other the first of many thousand kisses.

"Now, wait here with grandmother, while I go to get some things for you."

He set her down, and went to the establishment of a young lady, with whom he had a nodding acquaintance, devoted to the dressmaking mystery. The lady, by great good luck, had a complete set of clothes for sale,—property of somebody else's little girl, deceased, and, by invitation of Venn, went round to his chambers, where, first by the aid of warm water and soap, Dame Nature's handiwork was made to look clean and white; and then, with needle and thread and scissors, the child was arrayed in what to her was unspeakable grandeur.

"That's my little girl, Miss Nobbs," said Hartley looking at the result with beaming eyes.

"Well, I'm sure, Mr. Venn! You might have the good taste not to throw your child in my teeth, I do think."

"My good soul, I didn't. Are your teeth broken. Let me look at them."

Venn, you see, was younger then.

"Ha' done now, Mr. Venn. You and your little girls, indeed!"

"My dear Miss Nobbs, you and I, I am sure, have the greatest possible respect for each other. Do not let me be lowered in your eyes. The child is the grand-daughter of my laundress, the aged but still industrious Mrs. Peck."

"Snuffy old woman she is! I can't think how you can have her about you. And that is her grand-daughter?"

"This is her grand-daughter — Miss Laura Collingwood. I propose, Miss Nobbs, to devote a portion of my leisure moments to the cultivation in this child of those mental accomplishments and graces which have made you the admiration of the quarter."

"Good gracious, Mr. Venn! — you'd talk a donkey's hind leg off. Don't be ridiculous!"

"And, secondly, Miss Nobbs, I propose to ask your assistance in providing her with a set of suitable clothes."

"Now you talk sense. Let's see — she'll want six pr' of socks, two pr' of boots, three new pettikuts, four pr' of — yes, four pr' of" —

"Let us not go into all the details," said Venn. "I need hardly say, Miss Nobbs, that in selecting you out of the many talented and tasteful costumières in our aristocratic and select neighborhood, I rely entirely on that professional skill which" —

"Lord, lord!" said Miss Nobbs, "if all the gentlemen talked like you, where should we all be, I wonder? You let the child come to me to-morrow, and then I'll do all I can for her. You're a good man, I do believe, Mr. Venn, though you are so full of talk."

"Take a glass of wine, Miss Nobbs, and drink the health of Lollie."

This was the beginning of it all. Next day the child was brought round, solemnly arrayed in her new splendor, to be looked at. Hartley kept her with him all the afternoon, and gave her the first glimpse of the alphabet. This he found so amusing, that he repeated it every day until he had taught the child, who was wonderfully quick and intelligent, to read. Then he laid in an immense stock of picture-books, and gave them to his little girl as fast as she could read them; and then he taught her to write.

Three or four years passed on in this way. The afternoon lessons had never been interrupted, save when Venn went away for a fortnight or so in the autumn. They had gradually lengthened out, so as to take up nearly the whole day. Lollie came now between eleven and twelve, and

did not go home till six, arrangements being made with a neighboring purveyor to send up luncheon to Mr. Venn every day at two, which was Lollie's dinner. She was then ten or eleven years old, — a child with long fair curls hanging down her back, knuckly elbows, and long legs, such as most young ladies of her age may show. Only her face is much the same as when Venn picked her up on the doorstep, with a soft, confiding expression. She promises well — little Lollie — to grow up into a beautiful woman.

CHAPTER III.

THE most perfect love and confidence existed between Hartley and the child. They were a strangely assorted pair. He told Lollie, almost as soon as she could understand any thing, all his projects, all his disappointments. She learned to know him with that perfect knowledge which comes of always reading one mind. She knew what he would think, what he would say, what he liked. Her whole life was in him, and all her thoughts borrowed from his; for him, the girl had become a necessary part of his existence. Her education was his pleasure; talking to her the only society he had; she the only person in the world who seemed to care about what he did and how he did it.

When she was ten or eleven, the child had a fever. Then Hartley kept her in his own chambers till she was well again. Her grandmother came, too, — deeply resentful at being put out, but afraid to murmur. When she hovered between life and death, and prattled, when delirious, of green fields, it was Hartley who sat up night after night, watching her with anxious eyes, while the old woman slumbered in the easy-chair; and when she got better, — for it was bright spring weather, — he took her away up the river for a fortnight, where they rowed, and walked, and talked, and the roses came back to little Lollie's cheeks.

There was no question of affection between them, because there was no doubt. Do you think Adam was always bothering to know whether Eve loved him? Rubbish! He knew she did. As for Hartley, what had he to think about but the girl? What had the girl to think about but Hartley? Whom had she to love except him? What grace of life, what sweetness, what joy, what hope, but in him, — her guardian, her teacher, her protector?

The fortnight up the river was the first break Lollie had known from her town life. Henceforth it was her dream, her ideal of

all that constitutes real and solid pleasure. She had, before the story begins, one more break in a month by the sea; but this was not the same thing, because there was a third person with them. This was how it came about.

It was autumn, and Hartley was meditating his usual brief flight to the seaside. The girl was sitting in her usual place in the window-seat, with her feet up, a book in her lap, and in her hands some little work.

"Lollie," said Hartley, "how should you like to go to the seaside with me?"

She jumped off the seat with a cry of delight.

"I am not quite certain whether I can manage it; but I am going to try. I shall ask my sister to take you."

Her face fell.

"But that won't be going with you."

"I shall go too. Listen, Lollie. I want you, as you grow up, to grow up a lady. I am teaching you the things that ladies are supposed to learn at schools; but there are some things which I cannot teach you. These you can only learn from a lady. I refer, my child, not to those little dialectic peculiarities, if I may call them so, of our neighborhood" —

"O Mr. Venn! don't say I talk like a little street-girl."

"Not to those idioms," he went on, as if obliged to get rid of one sentence before he could frame another — "invaluable as they are to the philologist, but to the minor details of deportment."

She sat pouting.

"I'm sure you always said I behaved very well."

"So you do, Lollie, my child; and you have always been the best of little girls. That is the reason why you are going to be on your best behavior now. Put on your hat, and walk part of the way with me to Woburn Place, where Sukey lives."

Sukey was Miss Venn. Her real name was Lavinia; but her brothers — Hartley and the unfortunate Bob already mentioned — agreed early in life that so ridiculous a name should be suppressed, and changed it, without her consent, to the homely name by which she was ever after known. She, too, inherited a little money, with a house, from her father, on which she lived in considerable comfort, with the old family servant Anne, and a subordinate maid. She was a fat, comfortable sort of person, now approaching perilously near to forty. She had given up all ideas of matrimony, and chiefly occupied herself with her different curates, — because she never could quite make up her mind between Low and High Church, — and with the little things to eat.

Hartley used to go and see her once in three months or so, every now and then asking her to come and breakfast with him. On these occasions he would provide kid-neys, — "to keep up the family tie," he used to say.

Sukey received him with her usual cordiality, and rang the bell for Anne to come up and shake hands with him.

"I am going to the seaside for three weeks, Sukey," said he; "and I want you to come with me."

It was the very first time in his life that Hartley had expressed any desire whatever for his sister's company; and she was, for the moment, taken all aback. It took a considerable time to get her to make up her mind that it would do her good; and it was not till Anne herself interfered despotically that she gave way.

"Very well," said Hartley; "then that's settled. We'll go the day after to-morrow. Oh! I forgot to say that I am taking my little girl with me."

His sister changed color.

"It is for your sake, my dear Sukey," he said persuasively, — "for your sake entirely. Far away from Anne, from your — your pill-box and your little comforts, suppose you were taken ill? So Lollie is to go with us to look after you, and be your companion in hours of solitude."

Sukey fairly burst out laughing.

"My hours of solitude, indeed! Hartley, you are the greatest humbug I ever knew. I am to go with you because you want the child taught to be a lady. Oh, don't tell me! A lady, indeed — the daughter of a laundress!"

"Pardon me, dear Sukey. Her grand-mamma occupies that position. Her father was a gentleman. Our grandfather, my sister" —

"Was a bishop, Hartley. Don't forget that, if you please."

"We had two, dear. It may be uncommon; but such is the fact. In our family we had two grandfathers. One of them was, if I may remind you, not wholly unconnected with the wholesale glue and" —

"Don't be provoking! Well, Hartley, though I must say your taking up with the child at all is the most ridiculous thing; and what you are going to do with her I don't know. Yet" —

"Yet you'll go the day after to-morrow, my dear Sukey. Come and breakfast to-morrow at ten. That will not be too late for you. At this season, sister, kidneys attain to a size and flavor unknown as the year advances."

And this was the way in which Lollie got her education.

Time passes on his way; and, as is his wont, takes from one to give to another. Little Lollie grew from a rosy-faced child to a woman, — not so rosy, not so brimful of mirth and glee; but bright, happy, intelligent, and beautiful. Do you know the time — it may be a year, it may be a month, it may be a day or an hour, according to circumstances — which separates the child from the woman? It is a curious time. Watch the young maiden of seventeen. You will find her fitful, fanciful, inclined to long reveries; sometimes impatient and petulant. The old habits of thought are passing away from her, and the new ones are as yet strange and awkward. It is a time of transition. It lasts but a little while; for soon the sweet spring breezes blow, the buds of thought and fancy open into blossom, and your child is a maiden, *tempestiva viro*, — fit for love.

It is at this time that Venn's little girl has arrived. Hartley is conscious, dimly conscious, of a change in her. At times an uneasy feeling crosses him that the old, childish customs must be, some time or other, modified. Then he puts the thought from him, glad to get rid of an unpleasant subject; and things go on the same as before. Not that Lollie thinks any change will ever come. To her, life means reading, playing, working, in the old chambers; and pleasure means going up the river in the summer, or to the theatre in the winter, with her guardian.

It is a Sunday in early spring; one of those which come in April, as warm as a July day, and make the foolish blossoms open out wide in a credulous confidence, which no experience can shake, that the east wind is dead, and has been comfortably buried. "Courage," they say, like Charles Reade's Burgundian soldier, "courage, camarades! le diable est mort." Taking advantage of the weather, Mr. Venn has brought his little girl to Richmond; and they are floating on the river, basking in the sun, — Lollie holding the strings, Venn occasionally dipping his sculls in the water to keep a little way on the boat.

"I've been thinking, Lollie," he begins, after half an hour's silence.

"Don't let us think now. Look at the flecks of sunlight on the water," she replies, "and how the trees are green already. Can you not write a poem on the river, Mr. Venn?"

"What are we to do with each other?" he went on, without noticing her interruption. "We can't go on forever like this, child."

"Don't, Mr. Venn. Let us be happy while we can. Listen! there are the church bells! the church bells!" she went

on. "Why have you never taken me to church, Mr. Venn? Why do we not go like other people?"

"There are various reasons why *they* go, none of which seem applicable to us, Lollie. They go because it is respectable: we are not respectable. Poor, we are, it is true, and scrupulously clean, but persons of no occupation, and certainly not respectable. Then a good many worthy people go because it is the custom: it is not our custom. Because they want to wear their best clothes: we, my dear, have no best clothes at all. Because they want a little variety and excitement: you and I take our pleasure less sadly. And some go out of religion and devotion, which we do not feel at present."

She was silent. Somehow, perhaps, she felt that there was a sort of separation between her and that respectable world of which she could only know the outside.

"But when we do feel religious, we shall go, shall we not?" she asked.

Venn nodded. He was full of thought on this new question of the girl's future.

"Here is a water-lily for you, Lollie, — sit steady, — the first of the season. . . . Let us number up your accomplishments, child. You can play the piano; that is something. You can sing a little, — not much, it is true; your voice being, as Skey would say, what Providence made it. Very odd that they put all the failures on to Providence! You can read, and talk, and write, French. You know Latin; though why I taught you Latin, I don't know."

"If it was only to read Horace with you," said the girl, half pouting, "I really think you might have taught me something else. With his wine, and his lyre, and his eternal egotism!"

"He should have been here to-day, lying at your feet, Lollie, crowned with myrtle, playing on his lyre, and singing, as he floated down the sunny river, to the spring, —

'Diffugere nives, redeunt jam gramina campis,
Arboribusque comæ?'

"Which you translated, the other day, when we read it, —

'The year, for her reasons, keeps changing her seasons.
Now the leaves to the terrace return, and the crocus to Kew.
Earth puts off her seal-skin; and, clad in her real skin,
Smiles bright through her blossoms at spring with its sunshine and dew.'

Venn laughed.

"Yes, child; that is, I believe, how Horace might have written had he lived in

these latter days. You know how to touch the tender place in my heart. If we have any pride, it is in certain portions, unpublished, of the *Opuscula*, where an imitation touches—we only say touches—the original. But we were talking about Horace. I introduced him to you, you know. Surely you would like him—the fat little man, melancholy because he is getting older—to be with us now?”

“Yes, pretty well; only I suppose he would have tired of us very soon. We are not grand enough for him, you know. Ovid would have been better. He would have told us stories, like those we read together in the ‘*Metamorphoses*,’ about Cephalus and Procris, for instance. But no: I think I don’t care much for your old poets. I tell you what we will do when the summer comes, Mr. Venn: we will come here with Alfred de Musset, and read ‘*La Nuit de Décembre*,’ for contrast, while the sun is high over our heads, in the shade of a willow,—shall we? I sometimes think”—here she stopped.

“What do you think, Lollie?”

A child, you see, can tell you all; but, in the transition state, the thoughts grow confused; for then the mind is like a gallery of pictures lit up with cross lights, so that none can be properly seen. She half blushed.

“Go on with my accomplishments, Mr. Venn.”

“Well, we left off at the Latin. As for Greek”—

“No, I will not learn Greek. You may translate things to me, if you like.”

“At the new College for Ladies, I believe they make the damsels learn Greek. That shows your prejudice to be unfounded.”

“Never mind: I won’t learn Greek.”

“Well, then, I believe you have come to the length of your knowledge. Stay! it is not every girl of eighteen who has read Hallam, or who knows the literature of her country half so well as you. Upon my word, Lollie, I begin to think that our system of education is a success. You are a very learned little person: a few ologies and we should be perfect. Unfortunately, I don’t know any, not one—not even the ology of describing nasty things in ponds. How long is it since the education began? Twelve years. You are eighteen, child: we must think about”—he stopped for a moment—“about sending you to the new college, to carry off the prizes,” he went on.

She shook her head, and he rowed on, Lollie thoughtfully dipping her gloveless finger in the bright water, as the boat floated along under the bank.

“Could we not come always and live in

the country, Mr. Venn? Why do people choose to spend their lives in a great town? See, now: we could have a cottage, my grandmother and I; and you should have a house like that one, only smaller, with willows over the river, and a sloping lawn. We would sit out in the air all day, and read and talk.”

“And never get tired,—never want a change?”

“No, never. Why should we? I have such a lot of things, sometimes, coming into my head,—questions, thoughts. I should like to put them all down as they come to me; and then bring them to you.”

“Why don’t you put them down, my little girl?” said Hartley, looking in her face with his kindly eyes. “Why not come to me? And if I can’t answer them, we will try to find somebody who can. Tell me some of them.”

“I hardly remember. Only the contrast of the quiet and beauty out here with London makes me sad sometimes, when I ought to be happy. Do you think I am grateful, Mr. Venn?”

“It is I who am not grateful, Lollie. Do you know all you have done for me?”

“No. I am selfish. I am always thinking of what you have done for me. What have I done?”

“I can hardly tell you all, Lollie. I will tell you something. It is about twelve years now since I made out, quite clearly and unmistakably, what fate had in store for me. The prophetic voice said to me, ‘Hartley Venn, you are no good. You are a person without common-sense, without energy, without courage. You must therefore make up your mind to obscurity. You will not be able to marry—you must not fall in love. You had better resign yourself to live in your chambers until you require a nurse.’ I said, ‘Very well, my venerable sisters of the fatal spinning-machine. I would have asked a few questions; but perhaps, as it is easier to ask than get an answer, I had better hold my tongue. I accept the position, ladies, with a general protest against the inequality of things. I accept the position. Perhaps,’ I went on to say, with withering irony, ‘I may not be so proud of your handiwork as to wish for a continuance of my kind. You may break up my mould, if you please, and as soon as you please. It won’t be wanted again.’ They hadn’t a word to say in reply.”

“I don’t understand,” said Lollie; “that is, I only half understand. You mean, that you had not enough money for marriage?”

“Exactly so; and that I did not see my way to getting any. The prospect was not alluring. But then, you see, that com-

persating power in nature, whom, I think, the Romans should have made a goddess, one who would go about administering compensatory gifts, gave me — you, child; and I have been happy ever since, watching you grow, and become wiser and better; trying to show me what a lady ought to be, and getting younger myself in catching the enthusiasm of your youth. My little girl, you have been the sunshine of my life!”

The tears came into Lollie's eyes.

“You are too good to me, Mr. Venn. I will try and remember what you have said to-day. But don't say it again. Never say it again, please.”

“Why not, my child?”

“I don't know. When you said that I was your sunshine — ah! what, then, is my sunshine? A cloud crossed the river, and it seemed as if your sunshine was suddenly taken away. It is foolish — foolish — foolish!” she repeated, laughing; “but please don't say it again.”

Venn was resting on his sculls, and looking in her eyes with a vague sort of anxiety. Her cheeks were flushed, and her lips trembled. She held out her hand to him, and smiled.

“Forgive me. I am your little girl — your daughter — your ward — and you are my” —

“Not your father, child,” returned Venn hastily. “Here is Teddington, Lollie. Let us have no more confessions. Tell me some of your thoughts while we go back, and keep a look-out. Remember that day when you ran me into a tree at Cliveden Woods.”

“Oh, what fun it was!” she laughed; “and it took us half an hour to get the boat out again. Now, then, we shall be back in a quarter of an hour. What shall I tell you — some of my old thoughts? I used to think that if I was rich — very rich, you know — what a different world I would make it. Every poor man's house should be clean, every poor man should be taught not to drink, there should be no cruel want in the winter, bread and coals should never ‘go up,’ and the world should not know what was meant by the word hunger. Those were doll's thoughts, you know. Then I used to think, when I got a little older, how that one person — tolerably rich — might make a little street his own, and by force of example show people how they ought to live. Then I got older still; and now I think what one person could do, if he had the strength and the will, without any money at all.”

“How would he do it, and what would he do?”

“He might live among poor people, and

find out the way to help them without making them dependent. A man could do it, if he was not always trying to make people go to church. A clergyman might do it, if he was not like those I see about. But nobody will do it; and the people are getting worse and worse.”

“Don't think too much of the people, Lollie.”

“But I must think of them, Mr. Venn. Do I not belong to them? Do I not live among them? They are all good to me; and it goes to my heart that I have been taught so many things, and can do so little. Well, then, you see, I think about other things, — myself and my lessons, and you, and the dear old chambers, with the chairs dropping to pieces. If I were rich, I should cover the chairs, and get a new carpet, and buy you a new dressing-gown, and have the walls painted over again, and make them so fine that we should hardly know each other again.”

“They do for us, Lollie.”

“Ah, yes — they are delightful old chambers. Do you know, Mr. Venn,” she went on with a sigh, “I should like to know some young ladies. I don't mean like Miss Venn, but quite young girls like myself. I see them walking in the squares with each other and their governesses. I wonder what they talk about. Do you know?”

“I knew a young lady once,” answered Venn meditatively. “She used to ask everybody if they liked ‘In Memoriam,’ and she used to talk about dress a good deal.”

“I suppose in those houses about Tavistock and Russell Squares, they have every thing they want. Plenty of amusement, with all nice people, — ladies and gentlemen. They make all their interest in study, don't you think? With their opportunities, you know, they ought to. They are always trying to do good to each other. They never have bad tempers, or say unkind words to each other, like poor people. They don't talk scandal, like poor people; and they are not always talking of finery, like poor girls — not always craving for excitement, like my class. It must be a delicious thing to be a young lady. ‘Manners makyth ye man,’ as I read the other day. Isn't it a funny thing to say? But I should like to see how manners makyth ye woman. I imagine the life of one of these young ladies. When I see one walking along, looking so quiet and thoughtful and proud, I say, ‘My dear, you are very happy; you have no frivolous or foolish tastes, because you are so well educated. You have read all the best books, you know how to dress

tastefully, you do not spend more than half an hour a day over your things, you are full of schemes for doing good, you are not always thinking about sweethearts, but some time or other your lover will come to you, and take you away.' Every woman must think of love a little, you know. We are happy so, — isn't that the reason, Mr. Venn? Then, I see them going to church. It must be a beautiful thing going to church, — all kneeling together, without a thought except of goodness and religion. You can teach me, Mr. Venn, and educate me to all sorts of things; but you can never make me like one of the young ladies I see as I walk about."

"I don't want to, Lollie. I like you best as you are. Let me pull her in. Now, then, child, take care how you step."

They went back by train and dined together at seven; then up to Venn's chambers, where Lollie, who was very quiet and thoughtful, made tea. After tea, she played for him one or two of his favorite "*Lieder ohne Worte*," while he smoked a pipe by the fireside, and looked at his little girl.

She was a tall girl now, — not little at all. Her light hair had darkened into brown, her blue eyes were of a deeper color. She had a perfectly oval face; her mouth was small, and her lips perhaps a little too thin, tremulous; her nose straight and clear cut, her chin slightly, very slightly, projecting — just enough to show possible strength of will. Her wealth of hair wanted no artificial pads to set it up and throw it off as it lay, like an Apocalyptic crown of virtue, upon her head. She was dressed in a blue alpaca, simple and tasteful. She had thrown off the jacket and hat she had worn all day; and her little fingers rambled up and down the keys of the old piano as if they knew, without any telling, where the music lay. As she played, by the upturned eye, by the trembling lip, by the fixed gaze, you knew that her soul was in the music, far away.

Venn looked at her long and earnestly. What was he to do with this treasure, — this pearl of maidens, that he had picked out of the very gutter, and made a princess? Did you ever mark, in some rough, squalid field, rank with coarse grass, foul with potsherds and rubbish, some sweet wild flower, blossoming all by itself, — the one single pretty thing in the compound? Nature is always providing such wild flowers. Over the ruinous wall she trains the ivy, on the broken-down ramparts she plants the wall-flower: she will not that any thing should go on without some touch of beauty to redeem the rest. On the seas are the loveliest sunsets, in the desert the Child-

ren of Israel had their mirage. So you have seen, in some coarse, rough place in London, in some reeking manufacturing town, among faces blotched, faces smirched, faces besotted, faces sharp with the gold hunger, faces heavy with the remembrance of crime, faces vulgarized by common and stupid vices, faces low, bad, base, some one face in a crowd so bright, so pure, so beautiful, so *lofty*, that it seemed to redeem the ugliness of all the rest, — and such was the face of Lollie.

Venn put down his pipe, and stood behind her as she played. She looked up in his face without stopping.

"You are happy, child?" he asked, taking her face in his hands, and kissing her forehead in his paternal way.

"As if I am not always happy here!"

A cold chill passed through Venn's heart; for he then, for the first time, perceived that there was another side to this picture.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER side to the picture! Yes: for twelve long years the girl had been growing at his feet, coming to him daily, sitting beside him as he unfolded the treasures of knowledge to her, and taught her, within the bounds of innocence, all he knew himself. She came in the morning; she left him about six: for eight hours or so she was his constant companion. Then she went away, out of his thoughts, according to his habit; and he went to his club, to his restaurant, to his half-dozen friends, talked, smoked, drank brandy and water, and came home again.

And what did she do?

She went home — what she called home — to Puddock's Row.

There was once, in the old times, an unfortunate young person whose fate it was to be half her life an animal, — I believe a cat if my memory, a treacherous one at best, does not play me false; the other half she might spend in the ordinary delightful figure of the girl of the period. So, too, Melusine, daughter of Pressine of Avalon, and wife of the Knight Raimondin, who was obliged to forbid her husband ever to look upon her on Saturdays, when she put on, from waist downwards, the scales and skin of a serpent. Little Lollie, very early in life, realized that her life was to be something like one of these ladies, — of whom, however, she had never heard. From ten to six, or thereabouts, — Sundays as well as week days, — civilization, light,

ease, cleanliness, comfort, culture; all the pleasures that can be had in talking, learning, writing, and music; a life of affection, thoughtfulness, and care; a time spent with a man so much older than herself, that even now that she was grown up she looked upon him as almost her father, and loved him as much as any father could be loved. From ten to six, a sweet innocence of trust, the growth of twelve years' intercourse, of the outpouring of confidence which she could give to no other person in the world. From ten to six the modest pride that the girl had in being the object of all this grace and tenderness in her Bohemian protector.

But from six to ten, Puddock's Row.

To know Puddock's Row aright, you must visit it at least every night in the week, at each successive season. As the progress of my story might be hindered in the description of eight and twenty nights, let us only give a few general details. Lollie's grandmamma occupied a first floor, — four and sixpence the two rooms, — in the row, and was considered a rich and fortunate woman. She had only one set of rooms to attend, and Venn only gave her six and sixpence a week for all her motherly care; and Lollie did not know that her own pension money, weekly administered, in addition to this, by Venn, was all they had to live upon. The inhabitants of the row looked upon the girl with respectful admiration. Of her virtue there could be but one opinion, and but one of her beauty. She was the pattern of the court; and moralizing mothers, when they were sober enough to point the moral and improve the tale, were apt to fix her success as a theme, and narrate her story to envying daughters as that of one who had risen by her own merits.

They were a kindly, dissolute, improvident race, — always sinning, always repentant, always sick and sorry. There was the old lady at the end of the court, who worked hard all the week, and got drunk every Saturday night, and was wont to come out at twelve, with her hand to her head, crying aloud unto the four winds, "O Lord, how bad I be!" There were the family of five brothers at No. 2, who fought most nights in pairs, the other three looking on. There were two or three laundresses of the Inn, who were even worse, as regards personal habits and appearance, than poor old Mrs. Peck, and envious of her superior fortune. There was a swarming population all day and all night; there was no peace, no quietness, no chance for any thing but endurance.

And, in the midst of all this, the poor girl had to spend her evenings and her nights. Sometimes she would cry aloud for shame

and misery. Sometimes, when she was left alone, the squalor of her surrounding circumstances would appear so dreadful, so intolerable, so miserable, that she would resolve to beg and implore Mr. Venn to take her out of them. Sometimes she would shut out the world around her by building castles in the air, and so forget things. Only, as time went on, and things did not change but for the worse, she found it becoming daily more difficult to keep up the illusions of hope, and persuade herself that all this would have an end.

The poor grandmother was a trial. I am afraid the wicked old woman purloined half the money that Venn gave her for his ward, and put it into a stocking. She was not a nice old woman to look at. She had disagreeable habits. She was not reticent of speech. She was interested mainly in the price of the commoner kinds of provisions, such as the bloater of Leather Lane. And when she was in a bad temper, which was often, she was a nagster. From habit, Lollie always let her go on till it was bed-time. Then, at least, she was free; for the little room at the back belonged to her. She could have comparative quiet there, at any rate. The old woman preferred sleeping among her pots and pans, as she had been brought up to do, in the front room. Besides, she was afraid of her grand-daughter, and yet proud and fond of her. She felt more comfortable when the child was gone to bed, and she could nag all to herself, — audibly, it is true, and with the assistance of a little bottle containing some of Mr. Venn's brandy. On the whole, she was well pleased that she had but little of the girl's society. For like will to like; and many were the cheerful gatherings, not unenlivened with gin, which took place on that first floor, what time Lollie was gone to the theatre with Mr. Venn, with ancient contemporaries of this dear old woman.

I think I see her now. "Tout ce qu'il y a du plus affreux." An antique "front," always twisted awry over a brow, — marbled, indeed, but not with thought. A countenance in which deep lines were marked with a deeper black than covered the rest. Small, cunning eyes: if you lead a small, cunning life, your eyes do most inevitably become small and cunning of aspect. Fat lips, such as might come from always eating roast pork, — the greatest luxury with which Mrs. Peck was acquainted. A bonnet never removed day or night. A dress, — but, no, let us stop. Is there not a sort of sacrilege in describing, only to mock at her, a poor old creature who was what the conditions of life made her? Let us bring honor and reverence to old age. For Mrs. Peck no more shall be said. To her

virtues very kind, Hartley Venn was to all her faults very blind. She cribbed every thing. She never cleaned any thing. She smashed every thing. She cheated. But she was Lollie's grandmother.

Lollie's education we have sufficiently described. It had, as we have hinted, one capital defect. There was not one word of religion about it. Venn — not because he was an infidel, which he was not; nor because he wished to make an experiment, which was not the case; but simply out of pure carelessness and indifference, and because he never went to church himself — taught his little girl no religion whatever. She knew, from reading, something, — the something being the most curious medley possible, from a mixture of every kind of Latin, French, and English authors. Venn respected maidenly innocence so far as to keep harmful books, as he thought them, — that is, directly harmful, — out of her way; but he gave the child, first a literary taste, and then access to writers whose ideas of religion were more "mixed," than would have been good for the most masculine intellect. The Bible she had never seen; for the only copy in Venn's possession had, many years before, tumbled behind the book-case, and was thus lost to view. And of ladies she knew but one, Miss Venn, who still asked her to tea once or twice a year, treated her with exemplary politeness, and sent her away with a frigid kiss. Miss Venn, you see, was suspicious. She always fancied her brother was going to marry the girl; and therefore made it her business to try and make her understand the great gulf which comparative rank establishes between people, — grandchildren of bishops for instance, and grandchildren of laundresses. She had two lovers, — past and rejected, *bien entendu*. One was a gallant young lawyer's clerk in the Inn, about her own age, who accosted her one morning with a letter, which she handed, unopened, to Venn. It contained honorable proposals. Venn descended to the court, where the aspirant was waiting for an answer, and there and then administered a light chastisement with a walking-cane; the policeman, — he of the big beard and the twinkling eyes, not the thin one, looking on with a grim but decided approval.

Then there was Sims the baker. A quite genteel young man of a Sunday, if you see him got up in his best blue tie and flower in his button-hole, with a cane. He attacked the fortress through the grandmother, and persuaded her to accept the first offerings of love, in the shape of certain fancy ones, which greatly pleased the old lady. To her astonishment, the child threw the gifts out of the window; and Mr. Venn

went round the next day, and had a serious talk with the young man. He put on mourning the next Sunday, and walked up and down the Gray's Inn road all day in the disguise of a mute. But Lollie never saw him; so his silent sorrow was thrown away, and he returned to his Sally Lunn's.

And this is all her story up to the point when we left her in Venn's chamber, playing to him.

It was between nine and ten o'clock that she left Gray's Inn for home, — not five minutes' walk, and one she always took alone. Here she had a little adventure; for, as she was striding fast along the pavement of Holborn, she became aware of a "gentleman" walking beside her, and gazing into her face. It was one of those moral cobras, common enough in London streets, — venomous but cowardly, and certain to recoil harmless before a little exhibition of daring. He coughed twice. Lollie looked straight before her. Then he took off his hat, and spoke something to her. Then, finding she took no notice of him, he took her hand, and tried to pass it under his arm.

"We are old friends, my dear," he said, with an engaging smile.

She shook him off with terror, crying out.

There were a few people passing at the time who were astonished to see one gentleman take another gentleman by the coat-collar, and kick that gentleman into the gutter.

"Insulted a lady," said the champion to the by-standers, and going back to Lollie.

"Yah!" cried the mob, closing round him, *for he was down*; and, when Lothario emerged from that circle, his hat was battered in, and probably a whole quarter's salary of mischief done to his wardrobe. The moral of this shows how prudent it is not to be taken at a disadvantage; also that it is best to get up at once, if you are kicked into the gutter, and to cross the road; and thirdly, that, as the mob is sure to join the winning side, it is best to be the victor in all street encounters. Some historians give no moral at all to their incidents; for my part, my morals are my strong point. When I do not give one, it is only because the moral may be read in so many ways that even three volumes cannot stretch so far.

"Permit me to see you safely part of your way at least," said Lollie's knight.

He was a gentleman, though apparently of a different kind to Mr. Venn, being very carefully and elaborately dressed. His face she hardly noticed, except that he had a small and very black mustache; but she was so frightened that she was not thinking of faces.

"I live close by," she said. "Permit me to

thank you, sir, for your brave interference : I have never been insulted before. You have done me a great service. Good-night."

She held out her hand, with a pretty grace. He took it lightly, raised his hat, saying, —

"I am very happy. Perhaps we may meet again under more fortunate circumstances. Au revoir, mademoiselle; sans dire adieu."

She smiled, and turned into Gray's-inn Road. She looked round once. No: her champion was a gentleman; he was not following her. Why did he speak in French? — "Au revoir, sans dire adieu." She found herself saying the words over and over again. Nonsense! — of course she would never see him again; and, if she should, he was only a stranger to her.

She told Venn in the morning, who flew into a great rage, and promised always to take her home himself when she left his rooms later than six. In the course of the day he calmed down, and delivered an oration, — I am sorry I have no space for it here, — on the nature and properties of the common or street snob.

CHAPTER V.

PYTHAGORAS once compared life to the letter Y. This letter, starting with a trunk, presently diverges into two branches, which represent respectively the two lines of life: the good and consequently happy, — that is the thin line to the right; and the bad and consequently miserable, — the thick black one to the left. It is an elementary comparison, and hardly shows the sage at his best. For as to happiness and misery, they seem to me somehow dependent on public opinion and the length of a man's purse. A man with a hundred thousand a year may really do any thing; not only without incurring ignominy, but even with a certain amount of applause. He will not, of course, practise murder as one of the fine arts, nor will he cheat at whist; and he will have little difficulty in resisting the ordinary temptation to commit burglary. But, for the poor man, public opinion is a mighty engine of repression. Virtue is his stern, and often bitter, portion. Public opinion exacts from him a life strictly moral and rigidly virtuous. In all places except London, it forces him to go to church: in a manner, it drives him heavenwards with a thick stick. The rich man, in whose favor any good point — even the most rudimentary — is scored, may be as bad as he pleases; the poor man, against whom we score all we can, is just

as bad as he dares to be. This is one objection to the Pythagorean comparison. Another is, that young men never set off deliberately down the thick line. It is, I admit, a more crowded line than the other; but then there are constant passings and re-passings to and fro, and I have seen many an honest fellow, once a roysterer, trudging painfully, in after years, along the narrow and prickly path, dragged on by wife and children — though casting, may be, longing looks at the gallant and careless men he has left.

"I knew that fellow, Philip Durnford," an old friend of his told me, "when first he joined. He was shy at first, and seemed to be feeling his way. We found out after a while that he could do things rather better than most men, and more of them. If you cared about music, Durnford had a piano, and could play and sing, after a fashion. He could fence pretty well too; played billiards, and made a little pot at pool: altogether, an accomplished man. He was free-handed with his money; never seemed to care what he spent, or how he spent it. Queer thing about him, that he was a smart officer, and knew his drill. I think he liked the routine of the regimental work. Somehow, though, he wasn't popular. Something grated. He was not quite like other men; and I don't suppose that, during the whole six years he was in the regiment, he made a single good friend in it. Perhaps he was always trying to be better than anybody else, and he used to flourish his confounded reading in your face; so that some of the fellows were afraid to open their lips. We didn't seem to care — eh? about John Stuart Mill. Then, he wouldn't take a line. The fast man we can understand, and the man who preaches on a tub and distributes tracts, and the army prig we know, and the reading man; but hang me if we could make out a man who wanted to be every thing all at once, and the best man in every line. I can assure you we were all glad when we heard that Durnford was sending in his papers."

That was the state of the case. Phil Durnford started heroically down the thin line. When we meet him again, he is in the thick, the left-handed one, with the mob. This is very sad; because we shall have to see more than enough of him. You see, he wanted patience. He would gladly have won the Victoria Cross, but there was nothing in that way going just then. He would have liked to climb quickly up the tree of honor; but this is a tree which can be only attempted under certain conditions. Had he been a drummer in the French army, about the year 1790, he might have died Marshal of the

French Empire. But he fell not upon the piping times of war. So he went in for being a dashing young officer: rode — only he did not ride so well as some others; gambled — only not with the recklessness that brought glory to others; and was a fast man, but without high spirits. In personal appearance he was handsome, particularly in uniform. His cheek showed — what is common enough in men of the mixed breed — no signs of that black blood which always filled his heart with rage whenever he thought of it. His hair was black and curling, his features clear and regular. Perhaps he might have been an inch or two taller with advantage; while his chin was weak, and his forehead too receding.

Always weak of will, his heroic element has now, though he is only six and twenty, almost gone out of him. He looks for little beyond physical enjoyment of life: he has no high aims, no purposes, no hopes. Worse than all, he has no friends or belongings. So his heart is covered with an incrustation, growing daily harder and deeper, of selfishness, cynicism, and unbelief. When the Devil wanted to tempt him to do something worse than usual, it was his wont to show him his finger-nails, where lay that fatal spot of blue which never leaves the man of African descent, though his blood be crossed with ours for a dozen generations. Then he waxed fierce and reckless, and was ready for any thing. If the consciousness of descent from a long line, which has sometimes done well and never done disgracefully, be an incentive to a noble life, surely the descent from a lower and inferior race must be a hinderance.

He thought nobody knew it, and trembled lest the secret should be discovered. Everybody knew it. The colonel and the major had been in Palmiste, and knew more. They knew that George Durnford, late of the 10th Hussars, had only one son by his marriage, and never had any brothers at all. Then they put things together, and formed a conclusion, and said nothing about it, being gentlemen and good fellows.

No brandishing of the sword in front of a wavering line of red; no leading of forlorn hopes, — nothing but garrison life and camp life: what should a young man do? Here my former informant comes again to my assistance.

"Durnford," he said, "used to be always trying to out-pace some other fellow. Don't you know that a hunchback always makes himself out a devil of a lady-killer; and a parvenu is always the most exclusive; and a fellow with a nose like a door-

knocker always thinks himself the handsomest dog in the regiment? Well, you see, Durnford was a mulatto, an octoroon, or a sixteenth-oroon, or something. He'd read in a book, I suppose, that mulattoes were an inferior race; so nothing would do for him but showing himself an exception to the rule by proving himself our superior, — all the same as making himself out a bird by trying to fly. He muddled away his money; but, bless you! he couldn't really chuck. Chucking is a grand gift of nature, cultivated by a course of public school, army coach, and garrison life. Durnford did not understand the art. Now, young Blythe of ours, when he heard of the step vacant, wrote to his governor about it. Well, the governor actually sent him the money, instead of paying it into Cox's. The young beggar screamed with delight. 'O Lord!' he said, 'look what the governor's done!' And chucked it all in a fortnight, without purchasing the step at all. Durnford could never come up to that, you know. He didn't drink much; but there was one thing men liked in him. If loo was on, Durnford never played sober against men screwed. Always reputed the soul of honor in that respect. But he wanted too much. He would have liked to be popular among all classes, and he was popular among none."

My friend, upon this, took to philosophizing upon the nature and basis of popularity.

"I believe," he said, with some plausibility, "that a fellow is popular if he is believed to be better than he seems. One man, A., is a frightful villain, but he loves and respects B., another tremendous scoundrel and ruffian, because he thinks him possessed of some noble and elevating qualities wanting in himself. He once saw B. toss a halfpenny to a beggar, and say, 'Poor devil.' Now, that showed a fine vein of native generosity. You don't like a man you think to be worse than yourself, because he must belong to such a devilish bad lot; and the formula of A, the big rascal, is always that he 'may not be a religious man, by gad!' but there are some things which he would not do. . . . Well, you see, that poor beggar Durnford was believed to be worse than he really was. He did it himself. Used to scoff at religion: which is bad form, in my opinion, — religion being the business of the chaplain; and I'd just as soon scoff at the adjutant or the sergeant-major. That did him harm; and in spite of his riding and fencing, and all the rest, he really had very little strength in his body. Fellows said he padded."

When we pick up Philip, which is on the evening when he — for it was he — gal-

lantly came to the rescue, he has not yet sold out, but is enjoying the beginning of a long furlough from Malta. His affairs are not yet desperate, though he has got through a considerable portion of his fortune; having less than half of it left, and a good pile of debts, whenever it shall suit him to pay them. I fear that the account his old brother officer gave of him was, on the whole, correct. Certainly Philip Durnford, having had a six years' run of "pleasure" and dissipation, knew most things that are to be learned in that time, and was almost beginning to think that the years had been purchased by too great an expenditure of youth, health, and capital.

When the girl left him, he staid for a moment looking after her, as she tripped up the street with her light and buoyant step, and, turning on his heel with a sigh, strode off westward. He went to Arthur's club. Not finding him there, he went to his lodgings, and caught him reading in his usual purposeless, studious way.

"What are you going to do, Arthur," asked Philip, lighting a cigar, and taking the best easy-chair, "with all your reading?"

"Spare me," said Arthur. "I am one of the men who are always *going* to do every thing. Frankly, it is useless. I want some one to pull me out of my own habits; but you, Phil, have got energy for all the family."

"I've used some of it to-night," said Phil, laughing, and telling his story. "Such a pretty girl, Arthur! Oh! such a beautiful girl, — tall, sir, and as straight as an arrow! I should like to meet her again. I don't believe too much in the sex; but I do believe in the possibility of my making a fool of myself over one, at least; and, by Jove! it would be this one."

"Take care, Phil."

"Were you never in love, Arthur? Come, now, gentle hermit, confess. Was there not some barmaid in Oxford? Was there never a neat-handed Phillis — ne sit ancillæ tibi amor pudori — at the college buttery?"

"I have not been in love, Phil," said Arthur, lifting his fair, serious face, "since we left Palmiste; and then I was in love with Madeleine."

"Poor little Madeleine! So was I, I believe. And where is she now?"

"She was sent to Switzerland, after her father's death, to be educated."

"The education ought to be finished by this time. Why don't you go, old fellow, and search about the playground of Europe? You might meet on the summit of the Matterhorn. 'Amanda' he, and 'Amandus' she; and all would be gas and fireworks."

Then they began to talk about old times and boyish freaks; and Philip's better nature came back to him, for a time at least. He saw little of Arthur. They had not much in common. When they did meet, it was in great friendship and kindness; but they were almost strangers; and it was only now — Philip being home on furlough, and Arthur just come up to London — that they had come together at all since the old days in Palmiste.

I forgot to mention one curious thing in Philip's life. On the first day of the year, some unknown person always paid into his account at Cox's the sum of two hundred pounds. This came with a recurrence so regular that Phil looked for it, and counted on it. He put it down to a freak of Arthur's. Certainly Arthur had a good deal more of his own than he at all knew what to do with; but it was not Arthur, — who, living so simply himself, did not understand that his cousin might sometimes be in want of money. Philip took the money, spent it, and wished it had been more; and he said nothing about it to Arthur. The fountain of benevolence, you see, is a source which may possibly be muddled and spoiled by the uncalled-for tears of gratitude.

CHAPTER VI.

So, about this time, Hartley Venn began to be seriously troubled about the future of his *protégée*. He realized, for the first time, that she was now a woman; and yet he was loth to change any of the little customs which had gone on so long. For instance, that kiss at arrival and departure. A man of thirty-eight is certainly old enough to be the papa of a girl of eighteen.

On the other hand, many men of thirty-eight are not too old to be the lovers of girls of eighteen. He could not put a stop to that tender little caress. And yet, of late days, he caught himself blushing, and his pulse quickened, when his lips touched her forehead, and her lips touched his cheek. Only quite lately this feeling of constraint had sprung up. Not on her part: the last thing the girl thought of was love on the part of her guardian. There was no constraint with her, — only that hesitation and doubt which came from the birth of new ideas within her. The germ of many a thought and aspiration is sown in childhood, lying concealed in the brain till the time of adolescence makes it appear, and brighten into life.

Then Hartley, putting the question of love out of sight, resolutely refusing to admit it at all into his mind, set himself to

work out, as he called it, a practical problem. As he was the most unpractical to men, the result did not appear likely of "come out."

He appealed, in his distress, to his sister Sukey.

"You've educated that child," said his sister, "till she can laugh at young ladies. You've put your notions into her head, till she is as full of queer thoughts as you are yourself. She talks about nothing but philanthropy and history and what not. She is like no other girl under the sun. And then you come and ask me what you are to do with her. Do you want to get rid of her?"

"Get rid of her! Why, Sukey, you must be mad to think of such a thing. No. I want to put her in some way."

"Of earning a livelihood. Quite proper. And time she did it. By rights she should be a kitchen-maid. Not that I am unkind to her, dear Hartley," she added, as her brother flashed a warning look at her—"not at all. And she is, as I believe, a very good girl—spoiled, of course. What do you say, now, to the bonnet-making?"

Hartley shook his head.

"She shall not work for her bread, Sukey. I have taken a decisive step. I've made my will, Sukey. You don't want any more money. Bob's boy is looked after by his mother's people. And, besides, you can leave him your money, you know."

"I always intended to," said his sister. "You needn't go on. You have left all yours to Laura. Well, of course it's a shame, and all that. But you can do as you like with your own. What do you want my advice about?"

"That is just the difficulty. I want, somehow, to do something for her that will take her into a brighter atmosphere, out of the dingy surroundings of her life."

"She lives with her grandmother, does she not? At least, I have always understood that this was the very proper arrangement."

"Yes: where her grandmother lives I have never thought about till the other day. Sukey, my dear, I am a selfish animal. It was all to please myself that I made a toy of the child. To please myself, I watched her intelligence grow under my hands; only to please myself, I put into her head ideas and knowledge. In my own selfish gratification, I have made her ten times as well taught as young ladyhood is apt to be. I have never thought about what was to come of it—or of me. And now—now—she is a woman—and I"—

Sukey laughed.

"My poor dear Hartley, and you?"

you are in love with her! I knew it was coming, all along. Of course it is a blow. After all your brilliant prospects, and the grandson of a bishop, and a Master of Arts, and a barrister-at-law, and a scholar, and all—and—oh! dear, dear! But I always expected it, and always said it. If you will kindly ring the bell and call Anne, she will tell you that I have prophesied it any time this last six years."

When the misfortune comes upon you, it is, at least, a consolation to your friends to have foretold it; but Hartley was walking up and down the room, not listening.

"In love with her? I in love with Lollie? I have loved her ever since she looked up in my face, the very first day I saw her, and put up her lips to be kissed. In love with her? I have never thought of it. Upon my word, Sukey, I have never even thought of it till the last few days. It is nonsense—it is absurd. I am twenty years older than Lollie. She looks on me as her father: told me so last Sunday. Love! Am I to think of love, at my age? I thought it was all put away and done with. Sukey, forget what you have said. Don't raise up before me the vision of a life with such love as that. Let me go on having the child's childish affection and trust. It is all I am fit for. It is more than I deserve."

Hartley was not a demonstrative man. It was rare, indeed, that the outer crust of a good-natured cynicism was broken, and the inner possibilities laid open.

"Ask her, Hartley, if she can love you."

"No, no; and lose all that I have!"

"Shall I ask her, then?"

"You, my dear sister?" he replied, laughing. "He that cannot woo for himself is not worth being wooed for. No. Let things be as they are. Only I should like to see a way"—

"At any rate, there is no such great hurry."

"If she had any creative power, it might be worth while to make her a novelist. But she hasn't. She only imitates, like most of her sex—imitative animals. Man, you see, originates. Woman receives, assimilates, and imparts. In a higher state of civilization, women will be teachers in all the schools, from Eton downwards. Flogging, I suppose, will then"—

"Hartley, do be consecutive."

"I've tried her at writing, and she really makes very creditable English verses. Her Latin verses are a failure, principally because she will not study the accuracies of language."

"You don't mean to say you have taught her Latin?"

"Why not? Of course I have. We read together portions of Horace, Ovid, Virgil, and other poets. Lollie is a very fair Latin scholar, I assure you. Well, I suggested that she should write a novel; and, after a great deal of trouble, we concocted a plot. That was last year. We went up the river, and elaborated it all one summer's afternoon. It was a capital plot. Three murders which all turned out to be no murders, a bigamy, and the discovery of a will in a bandbox, formed the main incidents. Unfortunately we couldn't string it together. The result was not satisfactory; and we took it out one day, tied a great stone to it, and buried it solemnly above Teddington Lock. It lies there still, in a waterproof oilskin; so that when the river is dredged for treasure in a thousand years' time it may be found, and published as a rare and precious relic of antiquity. There we are, you see. We can't be literary or musical; our gifts and graces are so wholly receptive, that we cannot even become a strong-minded woman. What are we to do?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I only half understand what it all means."

"It means, Sukey, plainly, that the time is staring me in the face when I must do something for the child which will bring her into the world, and—and—away from my old chambers, where the atmosphere, very good for children, may prove deleterious for a young woman."

"If she could be honorably married," said Sukey.

"I suppose," murmured her brother, "that would be the best thing." Then he shook himself together, and brightened up. "My dear sister, I never come here—it is wonderful to me why I come so seldom—without getting the solution of some of those problems which, as I am not a mathematical man, do sometimes so sorely worry me. Married, of course! She shall be married next week."

"But to whom, Hartley? Do not laugh at every thing."

"Eh?" His face fell. "To be sure. I never thought of that. There is Jones—but he has no money; and, besides, I should certainly not let her marry Jones. And Lynn—but he is poorer than Jones, and I should not let *him* have my little girl. Then there is—Sukey, you have floored one problem only to raise another and a worse one. To whom shall I marry her?"

He put on his hat, shook his head mournfully, and went away. Next day he propounded some of his difficulties to Lollie.

"And so, after a long talk with my sister, the most sensible woman that at present adorns the earth, she gave me, Lollie,

the answer to the question I have been troubling myself with for so long. She says, my child, that there is only one way: you must be comfortably and honorably married. Her very words."

"I, Mr. Venn?" The girl looked up and laughed in his face, with those merry blue eyes of hers. "What have I done, that I must be married?"

"Don't raise difficulties, Lollie," he said, in a feeble way. "After all the trouble we had in getting Sukey to give us the right answer too."

She laughed again.

"I suppose I am not to be married unless I like?"

"Why, no—I suppose not. No. Oh, certainly not! but you will like, won't you?"

"And who am I to marry?"

"Why, you see, Lollie"—He grew confidential. "The fact is, I don't know. Jones won't do."

"Oh, dear, no! He is too—too—undignified."

"Mr. Lynn?"

"Certainly not. Is there any one else?"

"Not at present, my child; but we shall see. Let us look around us. London is a great place. If London won't do, there is all England; besides the rest of Great Britain, Berwick-upon-Tweed, and the colonies."

"What does it all mean, Mr. Venn?" she asked, sitting at his feet on the footstool. "Last Sunday you were talking in the same strain. You are not going away, or any thing, are you?"

He shook his head.

"I have not offended you, have I?"

He patted her cheek, and shook his head again.

"And you love me as much as always, don't you?"

"More, Lollie, more," he said, in a queer, constrained voice. But she understood nothing.

"Then, what is it? Do you think I am not grateful to you?"

"Don't, child—don't talk of gratitude."

"Do you think I do not love you enough? O Mr. Venn! you know I do."

Perhaps it would have been well if he had spoken, then, the words which rose to his lips,—

"It is that I think you can never love me as I love you—no longer as your guardian, but your lover; no longer as a child, but with the hungry passion of a man who has never known a woman's love, and yearns for your love."

But he was silent, only patting her cheek in a grave and silent way.

"Would you really like me to be married, Mr. Venn?"

He left her, and began walking about; for the spectre which he had deliberately refused to see stood before him now, face to face,—the spectre of another feeling, newer, sweeter, altogether lovely; but he faced it still.

"Can there be a better thing for a girl than to be married, Lollie? I wish what is best for you."

"Would it be best for me to give up coming here every day?"

"No, child, no," he replied passionately.

"Then why want me to?"

"It would break my heart not to see you here every day," he went on, not daring to look her in the face. "But — but — there are other things. Lollie, I want you to be happy during those long hours when you are not with me."

She turned red, and the tears came into her eyes.

"I have been, as usual, a selfish beast," he said. "I have only, since Sunday, realized in a small degree what a difference there is, of my making, between you, and the people in whose midst you live. Lollie, you are a lady. Believe me, there is no girl in all England better educated than yourself. I think, too, there is no girl so beautiful."

She looked at him with surprise. He had never before even hinted at the possibility of her being beautiful.

"Am I pretty? O Mr. Venn! I am so glad."

"Mind," he went on, careful to guard against possible error, "I only *think* so. I've got no experience in these things, you know."

"Ah!" she replied, "and very likely you are mistaken. I suppose all girls like to be beautiful, do they not? And you are not in such a very great hurry to see me away, married, or any thing else, are you?"

He smiled in his queer way. Hartley Venn's smile was peculiar to himself; at least, I never met anybody else with it. There was always a sort of sadness in the curve of his sensitive lips. He smiled with his eyes first, too, like the damsel in Chaucer.

"Hir eyen greye and glad also,
That laugheden ay in hire semblaunt,
First or the mouth by covenant."

"Not in a hurry at all, Lollie — only I thought we would talk things over some day. Now let us do something. It is six o'clock. We will dine together, and go to the theatre. Shall we? Enough of sen-

timent, and of confidences enough. We will rejoice. What does Horace say? —

"*Hic dies vere mihi festus*" —

"That is delightful," said Lollie, clapping her hands. "When you begin to quote, I know you are happy again. Let us have no more talk of marrying, Mr. Venn. One thing, you know," she said, placing her hand on his arm — "I could never marry anybody but a gentleman; and as no gentleman will ever love me, why I shall never marry anybody at all; and we shall go on being happy together, you and I, —

"*Il n'y a que moi qui ai ses idées la.
Gai la riette — gai, lira, lire?*"

And so, singing and dancing, she put on her hat and gloves, and taking Hartley's arm, went out to the restaurant which knew them well. As she passed through the portals of the dingy old Inn, with her springing step and the laughing light of her happy face, the old porter rubbed his eyes, the policeman assumed an attitude of respectful attention, and the cads who loafed about for odd jobs became conscious of something in the world superior to beer and a dry skittle-ground. Whenever I meet a maiden happy in her beauty, methinks, in my mind's eye, I see again Aphroditê springing up anew from the ocean. Happy Aphroditê! She reigns by no virtue of her own; she is not wise, or strong, or prescient; she does not hold the thread of destiny; she is unconnected with the electric department; she has no control over the weather; she is not consulted in the distribution of wealth or honors; and yet she is Queen among goddesses, Empress over gods — Regina Cæli.

CHAPTER VII.

THE days passed on, and Lollie thought no more of her champion; but Philip thought of her; and, when he took his walks abroad, more often than not bent his steps down Oxford Street and Holborn, praying silently that he might chance upon her again. He might have walked up and down Holborn forever on the chance of seeing her again, and yet missed her altogether. But one day, thinking of something else, he was walking round a square in Bloomsbury, when, raising his eyes from the ground, — I believe he was thinking of his bets, — he saw the maiden of his exploit tripping along a few yards before him. There was no mistaking her. She came

along, with a light, elastic step, full of youth and health, with her frank, sweet face, her deep blue eyes, and her tall, lithe figure: only by day she looked ten times as well as by night.

She, too, saw him, and blushed.

Philip took off his hat. She hesitated a moment, and held out her hand.

"I ought to thank you properly," she said. "I was very much frightened."

Philip took her hand, and turned. The girl went on, and he went with her. You see, it was one of the radical defects of her education that she positively did not know the dreadful "wrongness" of letting a man, not properly introduced, speak to her, and walk with her.

"I shall tell Mr. Venn I met you," she said. "He will be glad. Come and see him yourself, for him to thank you."

"May I ask—excuse me, but I do not know Mr. Venn."

"He is my guardian. I am going to him now. He lives in Gray's Inn."

It seemed strange to the girl that all the world did not know Mr. Venn.

Philip did not know what to say. As he walked along by her side, he turned furtive glances at her, drinking in the lines of beauty of her face and form.

"Do you live near here?"

"No, I am here by accident. I am living in St. James Street, in lodgings. I am on leave from my regiment."

"I don't think," said Lollie, "that I should much like to be an officer." She always took the male point of view, from habit. "I should like best to be a writer, a dramatist, or perhaps a barrister. But I should like to wear the uniform. Once I saw a splendid review at Windsor, when the Viceroy of Egypt was here. Are you in the cavalry?"

"No. I am in the line."

"Why do you not go into the cavalry? It must be delightful to charge, with all the horses thundering over the ground. Do you like your profession?"

"Yes, I suppose so—as well as any thing."

"You know," said the girl, "it is absurd for a man to take up with a thing, and then take no interest in it. I should like something I could throw my whole heart into."

"I could only throw my whole heart away upon one thing," Philip replied softly, and with a half-blush; for he was afraid he was making a foolish observation.

"What is that? If I were you, I should take it up at once."

"I could only throw my whole heart away—upon a woman."

Laura received the remark as one of profound philosophical importance.

"That is a very curious thing. Not a right thing at all. I should think it would be so much better to put your heart into work."

"Tell me," said Philip, in a half-whisper, "Do you not think love a worthy object of a man's life?"

"I really do not think any thing about it," said the girl. "And now I must leave you, because I am going down here, and so to the Inn. Won't you come in and be thanked by Mr. Venn?"

"No, it is enough to be thanked by you. May I—am I impertinent in asking you—will you tell me your name?"

"I am called Laura Colliugwood," she answered freely and frankly. "What is yours?"

"Philip Durnford."

"Philip Durnford—I like the name. Mr. Venn has a friend of your name, but I have not met him yet. Good-by, Mr. Durnford."

"One moment. Shall we never meet again?"

He looked so sentimental that Laura burst out laughing.

"You look as if you were going to cry. I think we shall very likely never meet again."

Phil grew desperate. His hot Southern blood rose at once.

"I must speak—laugh at me if you like. I have been hanging about Oxford Street in hopes of meeting you, and for no other reason. I think you are the sweetest-looking girl I ever saw, and—and—I am a fool to say it, when I have only spoken twice—I love you."

She looked at him without a blush on her face—quite coldly, quite openly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a man to tell her this at the second meeting.

"Do you mean, you want to marry me?"

The question, so abruptly and boldly stated, took Philip by surprise.

"Of course I do," he cried hastily—"of course I do."

"Oh!" she replied slowly, "I don't know. You see, I've no experience in marriage matters. I must ask Mr. Venn what he thinks about it. He told me the other day he should like to see me married. I shall see what he says about it first. We must never do serious things in a hurry, you know."

Surely the quaintest answer that ever man had to a proposal. Philip felt as if he were in a dream.

"Won't you come and see him yourself?" she asked.

He hesitated.

"I have been too hasty," he said. "Pardon me. I am rude and uncouth. Miss Collingwood, I ask your forgiveness."

"I wonder what for?" thought Lollie; but she said nothing.

"Let us wait," he said. "Marriage is a very serious thing, as you say. I am worse than a fool. Believe only that I love you, as I said; and meet me again. Let me learn to love you more, and try and teach you to love me."

"I will ask Mr. Venn."

"No," said Philip, with a sharp pang of conscience, "do not ask him. Wait. Meet me once more first, and let me speak to you again. Then you shall tell him. Will you promise me so much? Meet me to-morrow."

"I promise," said Laura. "But"—

"Thanks—a thousand thanks. You will meet me to-morrow, and you will keep the secret."

He took off his hat, lightly touched her fingers, and walked away.

Lollie went in to Mr. Venn. It was four in the afternoon, and the sage was hard at work on his last essay.

"I thought you would never come, child. What did Sukey say?"

"Miss Venn is better, and much obliged for the papers; and, O Mr. Venn! I've had an adventure, and I've got a secret!"

"What is the adventure, Lollie?"

"That is the secret. I will tell it you as soon as I can. Tell me, Mr. Venn, is it wrong to have a secret?"

"That is a wide question, involving a profound study of all casuistry and debated points from Thales to Mill. I would rather refer you to their works generally."

"Well, then, may I have a secret?"

"Fifty, my dear, if you will. You look a great deal better to-day, Lollie; and, if this east wind would be good enough to go away,—where would it go to, and what becomes of all the other winds when they are off duty?"

"Eurus keeps them in a bag, you know."

"So he does—so he does. Well, in spite of the east wind, let us go and look at the shops, Lollie."

They did; and at ten, after a little music and talk, the girl went home as usual, but feeling strangely excited.

Let us follow her newly-found lover, and tell how his evening was spent.

Just now this part of the day was usually devoted to the billiard-room of the very respectable club to which he had been elected on his arrival in England. He was an indifferently good player,—nowhere in good company, but could hold his own in

bad. He had no scientific knowledge of the angles of the table; he handled his cue clumsily; and was not within thirty-five points in a hundred of the best players at his club. Besides, he was not really fond of the game: it was the money element that made him play at all; and he never cared to play without having from a half a crown to a sovereign on his game. Philip was that very common animal, a born gambler. Now, pool always presented the attraction of chance; so Mr. Phil played much more at this than he did at billiards.

He generally got put out of the game among the first. Still, there is always a large element of luck about it; and, though you are knocked out, there is a chance of a bet or two on the lives left in. It was a mild enough affair,—three-shilling pool and shilling lives, just enough to keep the spark of gambling alive. At the pool-table, as a matter of course, Philip picked up a few friends—Capts. Shairst and Smythe, late of the—th, in which regiment they had lost all their money, and perhaps a little of their honor; living now, it is whispered, largely on their wits. Gentlemen such as these play well at most games, whether of chance or skill. They have a habit of making friends with new members of the club, though it is observed that these friendships seldom last long; and yet Smythe and Shairst were two of the most agreeable, polite, open-hearted fellows it is possible to conceive. No men corrected the marker's mistakes so softly: no men called to the waiters for a drink in so jolly and affable a tone. Yet nobody cared for their society. Perhaps the captains were to blame for this. Who knows. On the other hand, people might be wrong in whispering away their fair fame. The fact is indisputable,—they had the misfortune to be disliked.

Philip Durnford knew nothing of all this when he joined his club; and so, in two days' time, he nodded to the captains as they chalked their cues for business, chatted in a week, and was a friend in a fortnight. Perhaps, if Smythe and Shairst had known the exact amount of Mr. Philip's balance at his agent's, they might not have been so free and open-handed in the matter of cigars.

It was on the evening of this, his second meeting with Laura, that Philip dined at his club, and went quietly into the billiard-room after dinner: intending to play till nine, and then go the French play, where he had a stall—centre of the second row. The evening proved a sort of turning-point in his career; for, unluckily, he never went to the French play at all. His two friends had also two friends with them—very

young fellows, with the air of wealth about them. In a word, pigeons being plucked. Two or three other men were playing in the pool with them: among these was young Mylles, cornet in the Hussars, the most amiable and the silliest young gander in the club, a little looked down upon, because his father had been connected with the soap-boiling interest. Said Shairp, when Phil proposed to put down his cue and go, —

“If you would stay, we could make up two rubbers. Pray don’t go, — that is, if you can stay.”

It poured in torrents. Phil looked out into the wet street, hesitated, and was lost.

The card-room was cosy enough, bright and warm; though the rain pelted hard against the windows, and came spitting down the chimney into the fire. Over the fireplace hung the usual rules against heavy bets and games of chance, — a fact which did not restrain the astute Shairp. He said, after a rubber, —

“By Jove! Whist is a very fine game, and a very noble game, and all that; but at the risk of being thought an ass, I must say it is not exciting enough to please me.”

Capt. Smythe concurred.

So did Phil. He hated whist with all his heart. He was a bad player.

“I really think, now, if you will excuse me, I shall go to the play. It is past ten already, and I want to see *Mdlle. Dufont*.”

“But you can’t go out in this rain, you know. It’s absurd to have a cab to cross the street in. Wait a bit.”

Phil waited. Another rubber was played through. Smythe walked to the window, threw up his arms over his head, and yawned loudly.

“Smythe’s tired,” said Shairp.

“So am I,” said Phil.

“We might have a little something else for a change, eh?”

“Ah,” said Smythe, “we might. Confound it, though, we can’t play here, and” — pulling out his watch — “I’ve got a most particular appointment at eleven.”

“I haven’t had a hand at loo for — let me see — six months, I know, if it’s a day,” said Shairp.

His friend had ten objections — overruled in ten seconds.

One of the party never played at loo, and left them. The younger pigeon, who had just got into newly furnished chambers, said, —

“It paws so with wain, or we might go to my diggings. What a baw it is! One’s boots would be sopped thorough before one could get into a hansom.”

So they played at the club.

“Just ten minutes, you know,” said Shairp and Smythe.

The ten minutes grew into an hour and a half. The strikes were doubled twice, and the game was “guinea unlimited,” when the pigeons were so thirsty that they risked ringing the bell.

“Brandy and soda, waiter.”

The drinks arrived, and with them a hint that they were breaking the rules of the club.

Phil was the heaviest loser, and with his money he lost what is of much more value at games of chance, — his temper. He answered the polite message of the servant with an oath. Two minutes afterwards the steward came. Civilly he pointed to the rules hanging over the fireplace, and asked the gentlemen to desist.

Shairp and Smythe said he was quite right, and mentally calculated what they had won by handling the money in their pockets.

But Phil acted differently. He said, —

“It’s an infernal silly rule, that’s all I’ve got to say.”

“It is the rule, sir,” said the nettled servant.

“Then d — n the rule, and you too.” And he tore the cardboard from the nail it hung on, and tore it into a dozen pieces. Some fell in the fender, some in the fire.

“I say, Durnford,” said Shairp, “I think that’s rather strong.”

Phil laughed. The man said he must report the act to the secretary, and left the room.

They played till there was a single. Then everybody but Philip and one of the two pigeons had had enough. They were either winners on the night, or had not lost. So the pigeon, backed by Phil, insisted that they could not leave off yet; and the party of seven adjourned in two four-wheelers to the pigeon’s chambers.

Here, when the fire was lighted, and they had tried the quality of their host’s liquors, the game went on. A fresh place, new cards.

“My luck will change, you’ll see,” said Phil. But it did not; and, as all his ready money was gone, he put in I O Us, written on scraps of paper, and signed P. D., with an apology.

“A man can’t carry the Bank of England about with him,” he said.

“I suppose he is good,” whispered Shairp.

“Right as the mail,” replied Smythe.

So they went on, and the two friends took Phil’s paper as readily as their young pigeon’s notes.

The game waxed warm. The stakes

got high. Their host emptied two gold-topped scent bottles filled with sovereigns out of his dressing-case on to the claret cloth of his card-table, and they were gone in three rounds. The bottles held fifty a-piece too.

"My usual luck," growled Philip. "Looed again."

"I never saw any thing like it," said Smythe. "It must turn, though, and we need not hurry."

"Oh, no — play forever, if you like, heah," said their host. He was getting rather tipsy.

But Shairp and Smythe, who had earned their money, got fidgety, and began to feel very sleepy.

Shairp nodded in his chair. Smythe looked at his watch every few minutes, although there were three French clocks in the rooms, chiming the quarters, and his own watch had stopped at half-past three.

Phil's luck had not turned, and he was very much excited. His head ached, his eyes ached, the brandy he had drunk had made his legs feel queer, and his temper was what a gentleman's is when luck has been against him all night.

There were frequent squabbles as to the amount of the pool, the division of it into tricks, as to who was looted and who was not; but oftenest about who had not put his money in.

Little silly, honest Mylles was now the soberest of the party — always excepting the two confederates — and he was only kept out of his bed in his father's house in Eaton Square by the feeling that he ought not to be the first to run away, as he had not lost much.

Phil was inaccurate, and Mylles corrected him more than once. The others supported Mylles's view, and this riled Phil. At last, when Phil exclaimed, —

"Somebody has not put in again," he looked pointedly across the table.

"I put in," said Shairp, wide awake. "I know mine. It was a two half sovs and a shilling."

"I saw you," said Smythe, quite careless whether the assertion possessed the merit of truth or not.

" ——— parciť
Cognatis maculis similis fera."

"I know I put in," said Shairp and everybody.

"Then it's put on to me again," said Phil snappishly.

"You did not put in, I know," said Mylles quietly. "I saw who put in."

"That be d—d," said Philip, his features swelling, and his lips twitching.

The cornet turned a little pale.

"If you mean those words, I must leave the room."

"Consider them repeated," said Philip, in a fury.

"I must go," said Mylles, rising.

"Go, then; and be d—d to you."

To two persons present it did not matter. Their end was served — for the night. The three gentlemen who heard it were shocked, and ran after Mylles; but he could not be prevailed on to come back.

When they returned without him, Phil was laughing immoderately, with laughter half real, half affected.

"I'll tell you what I'm laughing at," he said. "I was thinking what a scene 'Thackeray would have made out of all this.'"

"Thackeray, at least, would never have behaved so to anybody," said the soberest of the men.

Phil laughed, feeling a good deal ashamed, and the party separated. Phil, with a note of the amount of the I O Us, — a good deal heavier than he at all expected, and a promise to send checks the next morning, — went home to bed.

It was broad daylight, and therefore tolerably late.

As he felt for the latch-key, he found the ticket for the stall in his pocket.

"Wish I'd gone there," he sighed.

Morning brought repentance. He sent his checks; he sent in his resignation to the club; he sought out Mylles and apologized; and then — most fatal act — he met Smythe, and accepted a proposal of that gallant officer to put his name down at the Burleigh Club.

CHAPTER VIII.

If you want to see Marguerite waiting for Faust, as likely a spot as any to find her is the left-hand walk, below the bridge, in St. James's Park, — that part of the walk which is opposite to the Foreign Office, and has an umbrageous protection of leaves and branches. I am told that the British Museum is another likely place. Certainly it has never yet been satisfactorily explained why so many pretty girls go there. South Kensington is greatly frequented by young ladies who delight in those innocent dalliings with a serious passion which we call a flirtation. According to some authorities, the Crystal Palace is the most likely place of all; but my own experience leds me to select St. James's Park. There, between the hours of ten and one, or between three and five — because Marguerite dines with her family at

one—you may always see some pretty rosy-cheeked damsel strolling, apparently with no purpose except that of gentle exercise, up and down the shady walks. Sometimes she stops at the water's edge, and contemplates the ducks which adorn the lake, or impatiently pushes the gravel into the water with the point of her parasol. Sometimes she makes great play with her book; but always she is there first; for very fear, poor child, that she may miss him. And he always comes late.

On this particular morning,—a fresh, bright morning in May,—the east winds having gone away earlier than usual, and the leaves really beginning to feel tolerably safe in coming out, a young girl of eighteen is loitering up and down, with an anxious and rather careworn look. Big Ben chimes the quarters, and people come and go; but she remains, twisting her glove, and biting her lips with vexation. The appointed time was half-past ten. She was there at a quarter before ten. It is now eleven.

"And he said he would be there punctually," she murmurs.

Presently she leaves off tapping the ground impatiently. Her cheek flushes. Her eyes begin to soften. She hesitates. She turns into the shadiest part of the walk, while a manly heel comes crunching the gravel behind her. There is no one in the walk but a policeman. He—good, easy man—as one used to the ways of young people, and as experienced as the moon herself, turns away, and slowly leaves them alone.

"Laura," whispers the new-comer, taking both her hands.

She makes a pretence of being angry.

"Philip! And you promised to be here at half-past ten."

"I could not help it, child. Regimental duties detained me."

"But your regiment is at Malta."

"That is it. Correspondence. Letters which had to be answered."

Lovellace himself never told a greater fib.

And presently they sit down and talk.

"See what I have brought for you, Laura," says the lover, lugging out a pair of earrings, in the child's eyes worthy to be worn by a duchess. "Will you wear them, and will you think of me every time you put them on?"

Laura takes the earrings, and looks up at him in a grave and serious way. She has none of the little coquettish ways of girls who want to play and sport with their lovers, like an angler with a fish. That was because she had never associated with girls of her own age at all. Straightforward, and perfectly truthful, she answered him now with another question.

"Will you tell me again what you told me when we met last,—the second time we ever met?"

"I told you that I loved you, and I asked you to marry me. Tell me in return that you love me a very little. If you give me back a tenth part of my love for you, Laura, I should be rich, indeed, in love."

"I don't know," she answered, looking him full in the face. "I like you. You are a gentleman, and—and handsome, and you are pleasant. Then you fall in love with me, which, I am sure, must be a silly thing to do. That's against you, you know; but how am I to know that I love you?"

"Do you want to see me?"

"Yes," she answered frankly; "else I should not be here now."

"Do you love anybody else?"

"Oh, no!"

"Do you think of me?"

"Why, of course. I've been thinking of nothing else. It is all so strange. I've been dreaming of you, even," she added, laughing.

"And you have said nothing to Mr.—what is his name, your guardian?"

"Mr. Venn? No—nothing. I only told him I had a secret and wanted to keep it for the present."

"Good child."

"Then I told him yesterday that I was coming here—all part of my secret—at half-past ten."

"You told him you were coming here?" said Philip, starting up. "Then he is quite sure to come too."

"Mr. Venn is a gentleman, Mr. Durnford," said Laura, with great dignity. "He trusts people altogether, or not at all."

"By Jove!" murmured Phil, "he must be a very remarkable man."

"Mr. Venn told me to keep my secret as long as ever I pleased. So that is all right. And now I must tell you two or three things about myself; and we will talk about love and all that afterwards, if you like."

"No: let us talk about love now. Never mind the two or three things."

"But we must, you know. Now, listen. Who do you think I am? Tell me honestly, because I want to know. Quite honestly, mind. Don't think you will offend me."

"Well, honestly, I do not know and cannot guess. You dress like all young ladies, but you are somehow different."

"Ah," replied Laura, "I never shall be like them."

"But, child, you are a great deal better. You don't pretend to blush, and put on all sorts of little affectations; and you haven't learned all their tricks."

"What affectations, — what tricks?"

"And I like you all the better for it. Now tell me who you are, and all about yourself."

"My mother was a poor girl. My father was a gentleman — I am glad to know that. He died before I was born. My grandmother is a poor old woman, who gets her living by being a laundress in Gray's Inn. And if it had not been for Mr. Venn, I should have been — I don't know — any thing. He took me when I was five years old, and has been educating me ever since. I never spoke to any lady in my life, except Miss Venn, his sister. I never go anywhere, except with Mr. Venn; and I never spoke to any gentleman, except Mr. Venn's most intimate friends, until I met you. I have no relations, no friends, no connections. I belong to the very lowest stratum of London life. Now, Mr. Durnford, you have all my story. What do you think of it?"

His face wore a puzzled expression.

"Tell me more. Have you no brothers?"

"No, none."

"That's a good thing. I mean, of course, it is always best to be without brothers and cousins. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know. It must be nice to have one brother all to yourself, you know. There's a large family of brothers, grown-up brothers, living next door to my grandmother's. They get tipsy every Saturday evening, and fight. I should not like brothers like them. To be sure, they are stone-masons."

"And now tell me more about your guardian, Mr. Venn. I suppose he is a fidgety old gentleman, — likes to have you about him to nurse him, and all that?"

— Lollie burst out laughing.

"Mr. Venn is not an old gentleman at all. Older than you, of course, ever so much. He must be thirty-seven, at least."

"Oh!" Philip's face lengthened. "And does Mr. Venn never — never make love to you on his own account?"

She laughed the louder.

"Oh, what nonsense!" she cried: "Mr. Venn making love to me! He has told me twice that he wants me to marry a gentleman. That is why I agreed to meet you again."

"So there was no love for me at all," said Philip.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that," replied the girl. "I've told you already. What more can I say? You asked me if I loved anybody else. Of course I do not. Then you asked me if I liked you. Of course I do. And if I have been think-

ing about you. Of course I have. Now, sir, what more do you want?"

"Laura, if you loved me, you would long to see me again; your pulse would beat, and your face would flush, when you met me; but you are, cold and passionless. You know" — his own face flushing — "that I think of no one but you. You know that — that there is nothing in the world I would not give to win you. And yet you play with me as if I were a statue of marble."

She looked at him in a kind of surprise.

"I don't understand you at all. What am I to say? You tell me you love me. That makes me very proud, because it is a great thing to be loved by a gentleman. I am grateful. What more do you want? My pulse doesn't beat any faster when I see you coming along the walk — not a bit. If it did I would tell you. Tell me what it is you want me to do, and I will do it. But of course you would not like me to tell you any thing but the truth."

She looked at him with her full, earnest eyes. His fell before them. They were so reproachful in their innocence and purity.

"I want nothing, Laura," he said, in a husky voice — "nothing. Only I love you, child, and you must be mine."

"Oh!" she replied, clapping her hands. "Then I will tell Mr. Venn at once. He will be glad. And you shall come up with me to see him."

"I am afraid that will hardly do," said her lover feebly. "No. Listen, Laura, dear. Mr. Venn knows you have a secret, and has given you permission to keep it, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then we will keep it. We will keep it till the day we are married; and then we will go together to his chambers, you and I, and you shall say, —

"Mr. Venn, I have done what you wanted me to do. I have married a man who loves me — who is a gentleman; and I have done it, first, because you will be pleased, and, secondly, because I love him too."

She pondered a little.

"I wonder if that is right. Don't you think I ought to tell him at once?"

"Oh, no! certainly not yet. Not till we are actually married. Think how gratified Mr. Venn will be."

She was not yet satisfied.

"I will think it over," she said. "Mr. Venn always says that going to bed is the best thing for bringing your opinion right. Whenever he is troubled with any thing, he goes to bed early; and, in the morning, he is always as happy as ever. I am quite

sure he would be very glad to be told all about it at once. Some day, how proud and happy we shall all be to have known him."

"Very likely; and meanwhile, Laura, nothing will be said to him."

"No: I will go on keeping the secret. But, Philip, it will be so delightful when we can all three go together up the river. Do you know the Bells of Ouseley? We often go there in the summer, row down the river, you know, have dinner, and row back again in the evening for the last train. There is nothing in the world so delightful."

"But, if we are married, you may not be able to be so much with Mr. Venn."

Her face fell.

"Tell me," she said. "Marriage does not mean that I am to be separated from Mr. Venn, does it? Because, if it does, I would never marry any one. No, not if he loved me—as much as you say you do."

"Marriage, my little innocent pet," said Philip, laughing, "means, sometimes, that two people are so fond of each other that they never want anybody else's society at all; but with you and me, it will mean that we shall be so proud of each other, so pleased with each other's society, that we shall be glad to get Mr. Venn, whom you are so fond of, to share it with us. He shall be with us all day if you like, as many hours in the day as you spend with him now; but all the rest of the day you will spend with me, and my life will be given up to make you happy."

She looked at him again with wondering eyes, softened in expression.

"That sounds very pleasant and sweet. I think you must be a good man. Are you as good as Mr. Venn?"

"I don't know how good Mr. Venn is."

"I could tell you lots of things about Mr. Venn's goodness. There was poor Mary. That is four years ago now, and I was a very little girl. I don't know what she did; but her father turned her away from his doors, and she was starving. I told Mr. Venn, and he helped her to get a place in a theatre, where she works now. Poor Mary! I met her the other day; and, when she asked after Mr. Venn, she burst out crying. Then once, when old Mrs. Weeks's son Joe fell off the ladder,—it was a terrible thing for them, you know, because he broke his leg, and was laid up for weeks, and nothing for his mother while he was in the hospital,—Mr. Venn heard of it, and kept the old woman till Joe came out of the hospital again. I saw him, one Sunday, carrying a leg of mutton himself, wrapped up in 'The Observer,' to

Mrs. Weeks's lodging. And I think Joe would cut off his head to do good to Mr. Venn."

Big Ben struck twelve.

"There's twelve o'clock; and he will be waiting for me. Good-by, Philip. I must make haste back."

"Keep our secret, Laura."

"Yes: he said I might. Good-by."

"Meet me here next Monday. To-day is Friday. I will be here at ten. Will you?"

She took his hand in her frank and honest way, and tripped away. Presently, she came running back.

"Please, Mr. Durnford," she said, "give me some money for a cab. I cannot bear that he should wait for me."

"He." Always Mr. Venn first in her thoughts.

She took a florin from the silver Philip held out to her, and ran out of the park.

He lit a cigar, and, strolling round the ornamental water, began to think.

What did he mean to do about the girl?

At this point he hardly knew himself, except that he was madly in love with her. It was but the third time they had met. He loved her. The passion in his heart was born a full flower, almost at first sight. He seemed now no longer master of himself, so great and overwhelming was his desire to get this girl for himself; but how? He knew very well that there was little enough left of the original five thousand. How could he marry on a subaltern's pay? How could he take this young lady, with her very remarkable education and history, her quaint and unconventional ideas, and her ignorance of the world, into his regiment? And lastly, how about Mr. Venn? There was another thing. When she accepted him—which she did, as we know, after a fashion quite unknown to fiction and little practised in real life—when she listened to his tale of love, it was all in reference to Mr. Venn. The very frankness with which the innocent girl had received his suit was galling to a man's pride, especially if it happen to be a man with a strong sense of personal superiority. Had he been a hunchback, had his legs been bowed and his back double, had he been an idiot and a crétin, she could not well have been colder or less encouraging. She did not love him, that was clear; but was he sure that all this innocence was real? Could a London girl be so brought up as to have no sense of the realities of life? Would it be possible that a girl would accept a man, promise to marry him on the very first offer, solely because her guardian wanted her to marry a gentleman?

Some men's passions are like a furnace,

not only because they are so hot and burning, but also because they are only fanned by cold air. Had Laura met her lover's fond vows by any corresponding affection, he would have tired of her in a week; but she did not, as we have seen. Met him with a cold look of astonishment. "Love you? Oh, dear, no! I cannot even tell what you mean by love. Yes, I love Mr. Venn." Amaryllis, pursued by Corydon, laughs in his face, and tells him that she will marry him because she loves Alexis, and Alexis wants her to marry somebody. And yet poor Corydon loves her still.

Corydon, meditating these things, and trying—to do him justice—to repel and silence certain wicked voices of suspicion and evil prompting which were buzzing in his ears, slowly walked round the ornamental water, and emerged into Pall Mall. On either shoulder was seated a little devil, one of the kind chiefly employed for West-end work—young, but highly promising, and well-informed.

"You love her," said one. "She is young and innocent, unsuspecting and credulous."

"She does not love you," said the other; "she only wants to please the man she really loves."

And so on, amusing themselves as such little imps are wont, while he sauntered along the "sweet shady side," a prey to all kinds of imaginings and doubts. Perhaps, after all, the imaginings came from the depths of his own brain, and not from any little imps at all; and, certainly, the existence of these animals does present enormous difficulties to the speculative philosopher, and since the times of the Rev. Mr. Barham they have not been prominently before the public. If they have any functions to perform in this generation, I should think they are used chiefly to influence men like our poor Philip—whose strength of will has been corrupted by evil habit, by vanity, by false shame—to draw a veil over what is good, to represent the bad as fatal, inevitable, and not really so bad as has been made out.

Now, as he turned the corner of Waterloo Place, a thing befell him which must really have been the special work of the chief of the Metropolitan Secret Iniquity Force. I may seem harsh in my judgment, but the event will perhaps justify me.

There came beating across the street, from the corner of Cockspur Street to the far corner of Waterloo Place, with intent to go down Pall Mall, a team of animated sandwiches. With that keen sense of the fitness of things which always distinguishes the profession, they had selected this as the fittest place to advertise a spectacle at the

Victoria Theatre. The ways of this curious and little-studied folk afford, sometimes, food for profound reflection. I have seen the bearer of a sandwich, on one side of which was inscribed the legend, "Silence, tremble!" and, on the other, words more sacred than may here be lightly written, heavily drunk outside a public, while a friend, engaged in making known the Coal Hole and the Poses Plastiques, was expostulating with him on his immorality. The perfunctory preacher had not taken his own text to heart. The principle is exactly the same as that by which the Cambridge undergraduate from far Cathay, who confesses that there is but one God, and Mohammed is his prophet, passes that barrier to distinction called the Little Go, wherein he has to master Paley's "Evidences of Christianity," and goes back to his native land and to Islam.

This particular procession consisted of thirteen men. On the proud shield which each bore in front and behind was blazoned a scene of almost impossible splendor and magnificence, while a single letter on each enabled the whole to be read by the curious, as the pageant streamed past, as "Titania's Haunt." "Streaming past" is poetical, but scarcely correct. It rather shuffled past. Most of the knights, or esquires,—scutiferi,—were lined with men well-stricken in years, their faces lined with thought, or it may have been experience. After some five or six had passed along, one experienced a feeling as of red noses. Their dress was shabby and dirty; their looks were hopeless and blank; some of them seemed to have once been gentlemen; and the spectator, looking at the men who carried rather than the thing they bore, was touched with a sense of pity and fear.

Poor helots of our great London. You are paraded, I suspect, by the philanthropists,—perhaps it is the great, secret, unsuspected work of the Society for the Suppression of Vice,—who make you carry a shield to hide their intentions and spare you unnecessary shame. They spend their money upon you,—not too much, it is true,—that we may have before our eyes a constant example of the effects of drink. March! Bands of Hope, with colors flying, and music playing, sing "Sursum, corda," and strengthen resolution by speeches and hymns; but, on your way home, look at this poor creature of sixty, who was once delicately nurtured and carefully brought up,—a scholar and a gentleman,—and tremble lest you give way; for the sandwich men mean drink, drink, drink. Better to have these woe-begone faces before us

as we walk down the street than the Lacedæmonian helot staggering foolishly in front.

Phil stood and watched them dodging the cabs. One by one they got across that difficult and dangerous corner where there ought to be an island every three yards to protect us. Presently the bearer of the letter I arrived on the curb, and fell into line. Philip dropped his cigar, and started. The man was looking straight before him. His face was perfectly white and pale, and without hair. His locks were of a silvery white, although he could hardly have been much more than fifty. His nose — a fat, prominent organ — was deeply tinged with red; his mouth was tremulous; crow's-feet lay under his eyes, which were small, bright, and cunning, set beneath light brown or reddish eyebrows. The aspect of the man, with his white hair, smooth face, and bushy eyebrows, was so remarkable that many people turned to look at him as they passed.

Philip walked with the procession, keeping behind him.

A tall hat, well battered by the storms of life, a thick pea-jacket, and a thin pair of Tweed trousers, seemed to make all his dress.

Presently Philip touched him on the shoulder.

The man turned upon him with a glare of terror, which, to a policeman, would have spoken volumes.

Philip looked at him still, but said nothing. He shuffled along with the rest, trembling in every limb. Then Philip touched him on the shoulder again, and said in a low voice, —

"Obsairve, Mr. Alexander MacIntyre."

The ex-tutor looked at him in a stupid way.

"I know you, man," said Philip. "Come out of this, and talk."

They were at the corner of Jermyn Street. To the surprise of his fellows, letter I suddenly left the line, and dived down Jermyn Street. They waited a little. He was joined by a gentleman; and, after a few moments, he slipped his head through the boards, and, leaving them on the pavement, hurried away.

This was what passed.

"You will remember me presently," said Philip. "I am Philip Durnford. There is my card. Get food, clothes, not too much drink, and come to my lodgings at eight o'clock this evening. Here is a sovereign for you."

Mr. MacIntyre spoke not a word, but took the coin, and watched his patron go striding away. Then he bit the sovereign to see if it was good, a dreadful proof of

his late misfortunes. Then he laughed in a queer way, and looked back at his boards. After that of course, he went round the corner; gentlemen down in the world always do. There was a public-house round the corner. He felt in his pocket, where jingled three-pence, his little all, and dived into the hostelry. A moment after he came out, his eyes bright, his mouth firm, his head erect, and walked briskly away.

CHAPTER IX.

In the evening, about nine o'clock, Mr. MacIntyre presented himself at Philip's lodgings. He was greatly changed for the better. With much prudence he had spent the whole of the sovereign in effecting an alteration in his outward appearance, calculating that his old pupil would be at least good for two three more golden tokens of esteem. He was now, looked at from behind, a gentleman of reduced means; everything, from his black coat to his boots, having a second-hand and "reach-me-down" look, and nothing attaining to what might be called a perfect fit. The coat was obtained by exchange or barter, the old pea-jacket having been accepted in lieu of payment; while the other articles were the result of long haggling and beating down. He looked, however, complacently on his new garb, as indicating a partial return to respectability.

Philip greeted him with a friendly shake of the hand.

"Why, man, do you mean to say that a sovereign has done all that?"

"All," said his tutor. "I'll just tell you how I did it. First, the trousers. Sax-pence the man allowed for the old ones, which I left with him. They're just dropping to pieces with fatigue. Eh, they've had a hard time of it for many years. Then I got a second-hand flannel shirt. He wouldn't give me any thing for the old one. Then I got the coat for my pea-jacket, which, though a most comfortable garment, was hardly, you'll obsairve, the coat for a Master of Arts of an old and respectable univaircity."

"Well — well. Did you get any thing to eat?"

"Dinner, ten-pence. I'm no saying that I'm not hungry."

Philip rang the bell, and ordered some supper, which his guest devoured ravenously.

"Short commons of late, I am afraid?"

"Vera short, vera short! I'll trouble you for two, three, more slices of that beef. Ah, Phil, what an animal is the common ox!

You feel it when you come to be a stranger to him. And bottled stout. When—eh, man?”

He took a pull which finished the bottle, and proceeded to eat; talking, at intervals, quite in his old style.

“Obsairve. The development of the grateful feeling, commonly supposed to be wanting,—thank ye, Phil, one more slice, with some of the fat and a bit of the brown—wanting to the savage races, must be mainly due to the practice of a higher order of eating. My supper has lately been the penny bloater, with a baked potato. No, I really cannot eat any more. The spirit is willing, for I am still hungry, Phil; but the capacity of the stomach is limited. I fear I have already injudiciously crowded the space. Is that brandy, Phil, on the sideboard?”

Philip rose, and brought the bottle, with a tumbler and cold water, and placed it before him.

“Brandy,” he murmured. “It has been my dream for four long months. I have managed, sometimes, a glass of gin; but brandy!—oh, blessed consoler of human suffering! Brandy!” He was clutching the bottle, and standing over it with greedy eyes. “Brandy!—water of life!—no, water that droons the sense of life—that brings us forgetfulness of every thing, and restores the fire of youth—stays the gnawings of hunger. Brandy! And they say we musn’t drink! Oh, Phil, my favorite pupil, for those who have memories, brandy is your only medicine.”

He filled a tumbler half full of spirit, added a little water, and drank it off at a draught. Then he looked round, sighed, sat down, and, to Philip’s astonishment, burst into violent sobbing. This phenomenon was quite unprecedented in the history, so far as Philip knew, of his late tutor.

“Nay,” he said kindly, “we shall manage to mend matters somehow. Cheer up, man. Have another glass.”

Mr. MacIntyre gave a profound sniff, and looked up through his tears.

“Give me a pocket-handkerchief first, Phil. I want to blow my nose. I pawned my last—it was a silk one—for ten-pence ha’penny.”

Philip brought him one from his bedroom, and he began to mop up.

Then he took another glass of brandy and water.

“Tears,—it is indeed a relief to have an old friend to talk to,—tears are produced from many causes. There are tears of gratitude, of joy, of sorrow, even of repentance, if you think you are going to be found out. Mine are none of these. They rise

from that revulsion o’ feeling projuiced by a sudden and strong contrast. Obsairve. The man unexpectedly or violently removed from a state of hopeless destitution to the prospect of affluence must either cry or laugh; and not even a philosopher can always choose which. I have got decent clothes, an old friend; and my brains—a little damaged by a hard life perhaps—are still greatly superior to the average.”

“And you have been really destitute?”

“For four months I have been a walking advertisement. Part of the time I was getting eighteen-pence a day as one of the Associated Boardmen. Eh, Philip Durnford, think of your old tutor becoming an Associated Boardman! Then I got dru—I mean I took too much one day; and they turned me out in the cold. I starved a day or two, and then got employment at one and three-pence, which I have had, off and on, ever since. It is not a difficult employment. There is little responsibility. No sense of dignity or self-respect is required. On the Sunday, there is no work to be done; consequently, for four months I have cursed the sawbath,—the Lord forgive me! Don’t ask me too much, Philip: it has been a sad time—a terrible time. I am half-starved. I have had to associate with men of no education and disagreeable habits. A bad time,—a bad time.” He passed his hand across his forehead, and paused a moment. “A time of bad dreams. I shall never forget it, never. It will haunt me to my grave,—poison my nights, and take the pleasure out of my days. Don’t ask me about it. Let me forget it.”

“Tell me only what you like,” said Philip.

“The passions, I have discovered, the follies, and the ambitions, of man depend a’togither on the stomach. The hungry man, who has been hungry for three months, can only hope for a good meal. That is the boundary of his thoughts. He envies none but the fat. He has no eyes for beauty. Helen would pass unnoticed by a sandwich man, only for plumpness. He has no perception of the beauties of nature, save in the streakiness of beef; none for those of art, save in the cookshops. He has no hatred in his heart, nor any love. And of course he has no conscience. Obsairve, my pupil, that religion is a matter for those who are assured of this world’s goods. It vanishes at the first appearance of want. Hence a clause in the Lord’s Prayer.”

“You—I mean your companions between the boards—are honest, I suppose?”

“Ah, well—that’s as it may be. It is one of the advantages of the profession that you must be honest, because you can’t run if you do steal any thing. No line of life presents fewer opportunities for turning a

dishonest penny. Otherwise — you see — stomach is king at all times; and if not satisfied, my young friend, stomach becomes God."

"Tell me, if you can, how you came to fall into these straits."

"Infandum jubes renovare dolorem. Eh! — the Latin tags and commonplaces, how they stick. It is a kind of consolation to quote them. When you saw me last was on that unfortunate occasion when you treated your old tutor with unwarrantable harshness. I have long lamented the misconception which led you to that line of conduct. Verbal reproach alone would have been ill-fitting to your lips; but actual personal violence! Ah, Phil! But all is forgiven and forgotten. You went away. I applied to M. de Villeroy for a testimonial. I still preserve the document he was good enough to send me. It is here."

He produced a paper from a bundle which he carried in an old battered pocket-book.

"There are papers here, Phil, that will interest you some day, when you have learned to trust me. Now listen. This is what your poor father's old friend said of your old tutor."

He shook his head in sorrow, and read, —

"I have been asked to speak of Mr. MacIntyre's fitness for the post of an instructor of youth. I can assert with truth that I have on several occasions seen him sober; that Mr. Durnford, his late employer, never detected him in any dishonesty; that his morality, in this neighborhood, has been believed in by no one; and that, in his temperate intervals, he is sometimes industrious."

"There, Philip. Think of that."

"You do not show that testimonial much, I suppose?" said Philip.

"No," replied the philosopher. "I keep it as a proof of the judeecial blindness which sometimes afflicts men of good sense. M. de Villeroy is dead, and so it matters little now. Do you know where Miss Madeleine is?"

"No. In Palmiste, I suppose."

"There ye're wrong. She's in London. I saw her yesterday with an old lady in Regent Street, and followed her home. She's bonny, vera bonny, with her black hair and big eyes. Oh, she's bonny, but uplifted with pride, I misdoubt. Why don't you marry her, Philip? She's got plenty of money. Arthur will marry her if you don't. Give me Arthur's address."

"You want to borrow money of him, I suppose?"

"No. I want just to ask him to *give* me money. Ye're not over-rich, I'm afraid, Philip, yourself, my laddie."

Philip laughed.

"My father gave me five thousand pounds. All that is left of it is in our old agent's hands in Palmiste. I get ten per cent for it. As I only got a hundred and fifty last February, a good lot of it must be gone; and I've had another little dig into the pile since then."

"Ah, ay? — that's bad; that's vera bad. But perhaps a time will come for you as well as the rest of the world."

"Arthur can help you, and I dare say will; but you must not tell him too much."

"I do not intend to tell him any thing," said the man of experience loftily, "except lies."

"Tell me something, however," said Philip. "Tell me how you got into such a hole."

"I went to Australia from Palmiste. Spent all my money in Melbourne, trying to get something to do, and at last I got put into the school of a little township up country, where my chief work was to cane the brats. Such an awfu' set of devils! That lasted a year. Then there came a terrible day."

He stopped and sighed.

"I shall never forget that day. It was a Saturday, I remember. The boys were more mutinous than usual, and I caned them all — there were thirty-five. And when one was caned, the others all shouted and laughed. At twelve, I read the prayers prescribed by the authorities, with my usual warmth and unction. Then I dismissed the boys. Nobody moved. There was a dead silence, and I confess I felt alarmed. Presently the five biggest boys got up, and approached my desk with determined faces. I had a presentiment of what would happen, and I turned to flee. It was too late."

"What did they do to you?"

"They tied me up, sir. They tied me up to my own desk, and then they laid on. They gave their reverend dominie the most awful flogging that ever schoolboy had. None too small, sir, to have a cut in. None so forgiving as to shirk his turn. Not one, Philip, relented at the last moment, and spared some of his biceps. Pairfect silence reigned; and when it was over, they placed me back in my chair, with my cane in my hand; and then the school dispersed. What I felt, Philip, more than the ignominy, was the intense pain. A red-hot iron might projuice a similar, but not a greater, agony, if applied repeatedly on every square inch over a certain area of the body. A thirty-handed Briareus, if he turned schoolmaster, could alone rival the magnitude of that prodeejious cowhiding."

"Next day I left the town. It was dur-

ing church-time; but the boys were waiting for me; and, as I stole out with my bundle in my hand, they ran me down the street on a rail, singing 'Drunken Sawnie!' That was a very bad time I had then.

"I tried Sydney after that, and got on pretty well in business—till I failed; and then the judge wanted to refuse my certificate, because, he said, the books were fraudulently kept. That wasn't true, for they were not kept at all. So I came away, and got to the Cape. A poor place, Phil—very poor, and dull; but the drink is good, and the food is cheap. I learned to speak Dutch, and was very near marrying the daughter of a Dutch farmer, well to do, only for an unlucky accident. Just before the wedding, my cruel fate caused me to be arrested on a ridiculous charge of embezzlement. Of course I was acquitted; but the judge—who ought to be prosecuted for defamation of character—ruined me by stating that I only got off by the skin of my teeth, because the jury understood English imperfectly. I came back to England, and went down to see my relations. My cousin, only four times removed—the baillie of Auchnatoddy—ordered me out of his house, and wadna give me bite nor sup. Then I came up to town, and here I am ever since. Ye won't do me an ill turn by telling Arthur my story, will you, Philip?"

"Not I; particularly as you have only told me half of it."

"May be—may be. The other half I keep to myself."

It was as well he did, for among the second half were one or two experiences of prison life, which might not have added to his old pupil's respect for him. These other adventures he omitted, partly, perhaps, out of modesty, and partly out of a fear that their importance might be exaggerated.

The astonishing thing was, the way in which he emerged from all his troubles. They seemed to be without any effect upon his energies or spirits. Utterly careless about loss of character, perfectly devoid of moral principle, he came up, after each disaster, seemingly refreshed by the fall. Mother Earth revived him; and he started anew, generally with a few pounds in his pocket, and always some new scheme in his head, to prey upon the credulity of good and simple men. That he had not yet succeeded argued, he considered, want of luck rather than absence of merit.

His projects were not of very extraordinary cleverness. But he was unscrupulous enough to succeed. Cleverness and freedom from scruples do somehow seem the two main requisites to produce the success

of wealth. The cleverest rogue becomes the richest man, often the most revered. He has been known, for instance, to get into the House of Lords. Mr. Gladstone will always, if he spends £20,000 on the cause, make him a baronet. But quite lately a new feeling had come over Mr. MacIntyre. He was beginning to doubt himself. For four months he had lived on about three half-crowns a week; and as the days went on, and he saw no chance of escape, he grew more and more despondent. It was a new sensation, this, of privation. He suffered, for the first time in his life. And also, for the first time, he saw no way to better things,—no single spot of blue in all the horizon. Rheumatic twinges pinched him in the shoulders. He was fifty-three years of age. He had not a penny saved, nor a friend to give him one. In the evening he crept back to his miserable lodging, brooding over his fate; and in the morning he crept out again to his miserable work, brooding still.

But now a change, unexpected and sudden. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ.* Hence those tears of the tutor, wrung from a heart whose power of philosophy was undermined by a long-continued emptiness of stomach. That night he slept on Philip's sofa; and the next day, after taking a few necessities—such as a shirt, a waistcoat, collar, and so on—from his benefactor's wardrobe, making philosophical reflections all the while, he devoured a breakfast of enormous dimensions, and proceeded to call upon Arthur.

"Ye'll remember, Mr. Philip Durnford," he said, putting on his hat; "by the way, lend me two or three pounds, which I shall repay from what I get from Arthur: I must have a better hat—ye'll remember to forget the little confidential narrative I imparted to you last night. It is not always possible to preserve the prudence of a philosopher, and to know what things should be said and what concealed,—*quæ dicenda, quæ celanda sint.* I told you more than I should; but I trust to your promise."

He found Arthur at work in his usual purposeless way. That is, he was surrounded by a great pile of books, and had a pen in his hand. Arthur was not happy unless he was following up some theory or investigating some "point," and had a Sybaritish way of study which led to no results, and seemed to promise nothing: a kind of work which very often lands the student among the antiquarians and archaeologists; but there was a tone about Arthur which impressed Mr. MacIntyre with a sense of constraint and awkwardness. Philip he somehow felt to belong to his own stratum of humanity. With Philip he was

at ease, and could talk familiarly. Arthur belonged to that higher and colder level where self-respect was essential, and any confidences of the criminal Christian would be out of place. Philip, for instance, had insisted upon his fortifying his stomach against the rawness of the morning air with a glass of brandy before going out. Arthur, on the other hand, offered him nothing; but, giving him a chair, stood leaning against the mantle-shelf, and contemplating his visitor from his height of six feet.

"I hope you are doing well, Mr. MacIntyre," he began.

"I am not doing well," replied the Scotchman. "I'm doing very badly."

"I do not ask your history since I saw you last."

"Mr. Arthur Durnford, you are my old pupil, — I may add, my favorite pupil, — and you are privileged to say what you please. My life is open to any question you may like to ask. The failure of a school in Australia, through my — my firmness in maintaining discipline; that of a prosperous place of business in Sydney, through an unexpected rise in the bank-rate; and the breakdown of my plans in Cape Town, brought me home in a condition of extreme penury. From this I was rescued by the generosity of Lieut. Philip Durnford, who has most liberally assisted me out of his very slender means, — his very slender means. Ask me any questions you like, Mr. Durnford; but do not, if you please, insinuate that I have any thing to conceal."

He smote his chest, and assumed an air of Spartan virtue.

"Well, well. Only, the fact is, Mr. MacIntyre, I remember that the last time I saw you, you were receiving punishment from Philip's hands for some disgraceful proposals."

"Pardon me — Mr. Philip was under a mistake. This, I believe, he will now acknowledge. I have forgiven him."

"I hope he was mistaken. Anyhow, my opinion of you, formed as a boy, could not possibly be favorable."

"At the time you speak of, I was suffering from deepsomania. I am now recovered, thanks to having taken the pledge for a term of years, now expired."

"What are you doing now?"

"Nothing."

"What have you been doing?"

"Starving."

"What do you want to do?"

"I want you to find me some money. I cannot promise to pay it back, because I am too poor to promise any thing; but if you will advance me fifty pounds, I think I can do something with it."

Arthur took his check-book, and sat down thoughtfully.

"I will do this for you. I will lend you fifty pounds, which, as you are a thrifty man, ought to last you six months. You will spend that time in looking about you, and trying to get work. At the end of six months, if you want it, I will lend you another fifty; but that is all I will do for you. And I shall specially ask Philip not to give you money."

Mr. MacIntyre was not profuse in his thanks. He took the check, examined it carefully, folded it, and put it in his pocket.

"I knew you'd help me," he said. "I told Philip so this morning. Can I forward you in your studies now? The phreological system of Hamilton, for instance."

"Yes; never mind my studies, if you please. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"I do not ca' to mind that there is. I'll look in again when there is. Have you seen Miss Madeleine, Mr. Durnford, since she came to London?"

"Madeleine? No. Is she in London? What is her address? — how long has she been here?"

"I dare say I could find out her address; but it might cost money."

He looked so cunning as he said this, that Arthur burst out laughing.

"You are a cool hand, Mr. MacIntyre. How much would it cost? — five pounds?"

"Now, really, Mr. Arthur, to suppose that a man can run all over London for five pounds! And that to find the address of your oldest friend."

"Well, twenty pounds? — thirty pounds? Hang it, man, I must know."

"I should think," said the philosopher, meditating, "it *might* be found for forty pounds, if the money was paid at once."

Arthur wrote another check, which MacIntyre put into his pocket-book as before.

"This does not prejudice the fifty pounds in six months' time?" he said. "Very well. I remember now that I have her address in my pocket. I followed her home, and asked a servant. Here it is, — No. 31 Hatherley Street, Eaton Square."

"Did you speak to her?"

"Is it likely?" replied Mr. MacIntyre, thinking of his boards.

"Confess that you have done a good stroke of business this morning," said Arthur. "Ninety pounds is not bad. You can't always sell an address for forty pounds."

"Sell an address? My dear sir, you mistake me altogether. Do not, if you please, imagine that I am one of those who sell such little information as I possess.

Remember, if you please, that you are addressing a Master of Arts of an ancient" —

"You are quite yourself again, Mr. MacIntyre," said Arthur. "Good-morning, now. Keep away from drink, and" —

"Sir, I have already reminded you that" —

"Good-morning, Mr. MacIntyre."

He went away, cashed both his checks, and, taking lodgings, proceeded to buy such small belongings as the simplest civilization demands, such as a hair-brush, linen, and a two-gallon cask of whiskey. Then he ordered the servant to keep a kettle always on the hob; sat down, rubbed his hands, lit a pipe, and began to meditate.

CHAPTER X.

It was quite true. Madeleine was in England.

Eight years since, Madeleine, before leaving her native island, had ridden over to Fontainebleau to take farewell of a place where she had spent so many happy days. The house was uninhabited and shut up; but the manager of the estates was careful to keep it in repair. It all looked as it used to. The canes, clean and well kept, waving in the sunlight, in green and yellow and gray; the mill busier than ever, with its whirl of grinding wheels; the sweet, rich smell of the sugar; the huge vats of seething, foaming juice, and the whirling turbines. But the old veranda was no longer strewn with its cane mats and chairs; and, when the doors were opened for her, the house felt chill and damp. She lifted the piano-lid, and touched the keys, shrinking back with a cry of fright. It was like a voice from the dead, — so cracked and thin and strident was the sound. In the boys' study were their old school-books lying about, just as they had left them; in a drawer which she opened, some paper scribbled with boyish sketches. One of these represented a gentleman, whose features were of an exaggerated Scotch type, endeavoring to mount his pony. The animal was turning upon him with an air of reproach, as one saying, "Sir, you are drunk again." This was inscribed at the back, "Philippus fecit." Then there was another and more finished effort, signed Arthur, of a girl's head in chalk. Perhaps the merit of this picture was slender; but Madeleine blushed when she looked at it, and took both pictures away with her.

There was no other souvenir that she cared to have; and, leaving the house, she paid a visit to the garden. Oh, the gar-

den! Where once had been pine-apples were pumpkins; where had been strawberries were pumpkins; where there had once been flower-beds, vegetables, or shrubs, were pumpkins. Pumpkin was king. He lay there — green, black, or golden — basking in the sun. He had devoured all, and spread himself over all.

So Madeleine came away; and, under the maternal wing of the Bishopess, — whose right reverend husband, as happens once in two years to all colonial bishops, had business connected with his diocese which brought him to England, — was duly shipped to Southampton, and presently forwarded to Switzerland.

Education. Her guardian was a Frenchman by descent, a Swiss by choice. He had enlarged views, and brought up the girl as a liberal Protestant. He had her taught the proper amount of accomplishments. He made her talk English, though with a slight foreign accent, as well as French; and, what was much more important, gave her ideas as to independence and unconventionality which sank deep, and moulded her whole character. Inasmuch that one day she announced her intention of going away and setting up for herself.

"I am of age," she said. "I want to see the world a little. I want to make up my mind what to do with myself."

Old M. Lajardie chuckled.

"See what it is," he observed, "to bring up a girl as she ought to be brought up. My dear, if it had not been for me, you would at this moment be wanting to go into a convent."

She shook her head.

"I know the sex, child. You belong to the class which takes to religion like a duck to water. This being denied you, you will take to philanthropy, usefulness, all sorts of things. That is why I taught you English, because England is the only country possible for a full exercise of these virtues. Then you are of a temperament which would have induced blind submission in a man, and makes a delightful obstinacy in a free woman."

"Upon my word, my dear guardian" —

"And then, my child, there is another quality in you, which would have made you the most rapturous of sisters, which will make you the best and most devoted of wives. You will marry, Madeleine."

"It is possible," she said. "It may come in my way, as it does in most people's lives; but I do not count upon marriage as a part of my life."

"You are rich, Madeleine. You have — well, more than your fair share of beauty. Black hair and black eyes are common;

but not such splendid hair as yours, or eyes as bright. There are girls as tall as you, but few with so good a figure."

"Don't, guardian," said Madeleine, with a little *moue* and a half-blush. "I would rather you told me of my faults."

"I know the sex, I tell you," repeated the old man. "When I was young — ah, what a thing it is to be young! — I made a profound study of the sex. It is quite true, Madeleine, though I am only an old man who says it, that even Madame Récamier herself, in her best days, had not a more finished style than yours. You will succeed, my child: you will be able to marry any one — any one you please."

"You do not imagine, I suppose, that I am to fall in love with the first rich young man who tells me that he loves me? As if there was nothing in the world for women to think of but love."

"Most women," went on her critic, "like to be married to a lord and master. I prophecy for you, Madeleine, that your husband will be content to obey rather than to command. So, child, you shall see the world. Let me only just write to our friend, Mrs. Longworthy, who will act as your chaperon. You will find yourself richer than you think perhaps. All your money is in the English funds, and the interest has been used to buy fresh stock. Go now, my ward — I will think over what is best to be done."

The old man attended her to the door, and, shutting it after her, went through a little pantomime of satisfaction. That done, he took down a volume of Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary," and wagged his head over the wisdom that he found therein.

"Independent," he murmured; "rich, self-reliant, able to think, not superstitious, not infected with insular prejudices, philanthropic, beautiful. She will do. Elle ira loin, mon ami," he said, tapping his own forehead. "You have done well. When revolutions come, and lines of thought are changed, it is good to have such women at hand, to steady the men. France rules the world, and the women rule France. Hein? it sounds epigrammatic. Has it been said before?"

So to England Madeleine came. A chaperon was found for her in the widow of an old friend of M. Lajardie, — a certain Mrs. Longworthy, who was willing — and more than that, able — to take her into society. They took one of those extremely comfortable little houses — the rent of which is so absurdly out of proportion to their size — close to Eaton Square: a house with its two little drawing-rooms and greenhouse at the back, — a little narrow

as regards dining-room accommodation, but broad enough, as Mrs. Longworthy put it, for two lone women.

Madeleine's chaperon was only remarkable for her extraordinary coyness and love of comfort. A cushiony old lady, — one who sat by the fireside and purred; and, when things went badly with her, went to bed, and staid there till they came round again. An old lady who went to church every Sunday, and, like the late lamented Duke of Sussex, murmured after each commandment, "Never did that: never did that." So that the rules of prohibition did not affect her own conscience. For all the rest, she entirely trusted and admired Madeleine, and never even ventured on a remonstrance with her.

Madeleine was what her guardian described her. In her presence most men felt themselves above their own stratum. There was a sort of gulf; and yet, with all the men's experience, the clear light of her eyes seemed to read so far beyond their actual ken. If she liked you, and talked to you, you came away from her strengthened and braced up. Beautiful she certainly was, in a way of her own: striking, the women called her, — a word which the sex generally employ when they feel envious of power and physique beyond their own. Rolls of black hair; a pale and colorless cheek; a small and firm mouth; clear and sharply-defined nostrils; eyes that were habitually limpid and soft, which yet might flash to sudden outbreaks of storm; and a figure beyond all expression *gracieuse*. A woman who could talk; one whom young warriors, having to take her in to dinner, speedily felt beyond them altogether; one who lifted a man up, and made him breathe a purer air. This is, I take it, the highest function of woman. We cannot, as a rule, run comfortably in signal harness, but are bound by the laws of our being to have a mate of some kind. It is surely best for us to find one whose sense of duty is stronger than our own, and whose standard is higher. We may have to do all the work; but we want a fellow in the harness to show us that the work is good, and that it behooves us to do well.

Madeleine was not, it is certain, one of the girls whom a certain class of small poets love to style "darling," "Pet Amoret," "sweet little lily." Not for any man's toy; no animated doll to please for a while, and then drop out of life; nor yet that dreadful creature, a "woman's rights," woman. Perhaps she was not clever enough.

Arthur Durnford called upon her the same day on which he got the address. He was a little prepared to gush, remembering

the little sylph with whom he used to play twelve years ago; but there was no opportunity for gushing. The stately damsel who rose, and greeted him with almost as much coldness as if they had parted the day before, silenced, if she did not disconcert him.

"I knew that we should meet again some time," she said; "and I had already written to Palmiste for your address. Mrs. Longworthy, this is my old friend, Arthur Durnford, of whom I have so often told you."

He saw a little, fat old lady, with a face like a winter apple, crinkled and ruddy, sitting muffled up by the fireside.

"Come and shake hands with me, Arthur Durnford," she cried, in the pleasantest voice he had ever heard. "I knew your father when he was a wild young fellow in the Hussars. Let me look at you. Yes, you are like him; but he had black hair, and yours is brown. And you stoop, — I suppose because you read books all day. Fie upon the young men of the present! They all read. In my time there was not so much reading, I can tell you, but a great deal more love-making and merriment. Now, sit down, and talk to Madeleine."

She lay back on her cushions, and presently fell fast asleep, while the two talked.

They talked of Palmiste and the old days; and then a sort of constraint came upon them, because the new days of either were unknown.

"Tell me about yourself, Arthur," said Madeleine. "I am going to call you Arthur, and you shall call me Madeleine, just as we used to. Mrs. Longworthy, — oh! she is asleep."

"No, my dear, — only dozing. Wake me up by telling me something pleasant."

"I was going to tell Arthur that I am sure you would like him to come here a great deal, — I should."

"That ought to be enough, Mr. Durnford. But I should too. We are a pair of women; and we sometimes sit, and nag at each other. Don't look at me so, Maddy! — if we don't actually do it, we sometimes want to. Come a great deal, Mr. Durnford. Come as nearly every day as you can manage. It is very good for young men to have ladies' society. We shall civilize you."

"You are very kind," Arthur began.

"But I must say one thing. Do not come early in the morning. I consider that the day ought to be a grand procession-triumph of temper. That is why I always take my breakfast in bed. Handle me delicately in the morning, and a child may lead me all day. Come, if you want to see me, in time for luncheon, at two; if you want to see Madeleine, at any time she tells you."

"And how is Philip?" asked Madeleine.

"Who is Philip?" said Mrs. Longworthy.

"My cousin, the son of my father's brother."

"Your father, my dear boy, never had any brothers."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Longworthy."

She shook her head, and lay back again.

"And what is your profession, Arthur?"

"I have none."

"What do you do with yourself?"

"I waste time in the best way I can. I read, write a little, make plans; and the days slip by."

"That seems very bad. Come and help me in my profession."

"What is your profession?"

"Come some morning at ten, and I will tell you. Send Philip to call upon me."

As Arthur went out of the room, he heard Mrs. Longworthy saying, —

"I am not wrong: I am quite right. George Durnford was an only son; and so was his father. The De Melhuyns, quite new people, told me all about it."

A sudden light flashed upon Arthur's mind. He *knew*, in that way in which knowledge of this sort sometimes comes, that Philip was his half-brother. He was certain of it. He reasoned with himself; set up all the objections; proved to himself that the preponderance of chances was against it; marshalled all the opposite evidence; and remained absolutely certain of the truth of his conviction.

CHAPTER XI.

BUT Arthur went round, the same evening, to Philip's lodgings.

"How much did MacIntyre charge you for Madeleine's address?" asked the man of larger experience.

Arthur colored, —

"Well, we did drive a bargain. Why did you not send it to me?"

"First, because I did not possess it; secondly, because, if I had, MacIntyre was so entirely frank with me as to what he intended, that it would have gone to my heart to spoil his little game. Tell me how Madeleine is looking."

"Here is the address. Go and see her yourself."

"Is she milk and water? But of course" —

"Go and see her yourself."

"I don't know that I shall, Arthur. We are different, you and I. You are an eligible *parti*: I am only a detrimental."

"But, my dear fellow, there is no ques-

tion of that sort of thing. Madeleine is not like the ordinary girls you meet."

"Oh!" said Philip, "is she not? I don't go into society much myself, because I feel out of my element in that rank of life in which my fortunes allow me to circulate. The domestic business, with the conventional young woman, lacquered with accomplishments which get rubbed off when the babies come; the piano for the last new piece, and the song for the dear creature who breathes hard, and thinks she sings; the mind without an idea outside the narrow circle in which it has been trained — I do not think, Arthur, that my idea of happiness is quite this."

"Well, well; but all women are not so. Madeleine is not."

"Give me," he went on, — "give me some girl brought up out of ladies' circles and women's ways, brought up by a man; full of ideas, thoughts, and quaint fancies; pretty, in a way that the Tyburnian misses are not pretty; able to talk, able to amuse you, able to please you, when the little stock of accomplishments is all run through."

He was thinking of Lollie.

"A lady, and not brought up by ladies?" said Arthur.

"I was in 'society' the other day: five and twenty young ladies, whispering bitter things of each other, bursting with envy and malice. I want a girl who does not look on all other girls as rivals and enemies. I talked to one of them."

"You did not expect the poor girl to pour out her soul at the first interview."

"She had very little to pour. That little was poured. I came away early."

"That is not society. Come with me to see Madeleine."

The other, who was in his bitterest mood, sneered in reply, —

"They are all alike. Every woman wants to be admired more than other women in the room. That is the first thing. Without that, there is no real happiness. Then they want to be rich: not because they may live well, for they do not understand eating and drinking; not for the sake of art, because they only know the art chatter. If they felt art, do you think they would dress as they do? No, sir: they want money in order to make their acquaintance envious. For themselves, what a woman desires and likes most in the world is to be kept warm. Give the squaw her blanket, or the lady her cushion, and she is happy. Warmth, wealth, admiration: those are the three things she desires. What can we expect? Read the literature about women, from Anacreon to the comic papers. We have conspired together

against the sex. We have agreed to keep them foolish and vain, — to limit their aspirations to dress; and deuced well we have succeeded."

Arthur laughed.

"Take the Newgate Calendar, Phil, to represent manhood, if you like. Just as well exaggerate the faults of women, and make them represent womanhood. Women love admiration because it is an instinct. Their influence is through their beauty. It is a net spread by nature to entrap and catch men, in order that they may be led heavenwards. Wild beasts, like you, who prefer the woods, full of pitfalls and snares, to the soft green glades" —

"Rubbish," said Philip.

"Not rubbish at all. Don't despise women, — don't cry them down. Go in for marrying, and try the domestic happiness you declaim against."

"All which means that you are *épris* with Madeleine yourself, I suppose. It is, perhaps, the best thing you can do. But look at the other side of the picture. Suppose that what we call the highest kind of life — by which you mean, I take it, the calm cultivation of all that is artistic, unbiassed by passion and undisturbed by regrets — is out of your reach, because you can't afford it, don't you think it prudent to say, 'Young man, you are not intended to marry. Do not be an accomplice in the production of a generation of paupers. On the other hand, get as much as you can out of life with the resources at your disposal.'"

"Every man may lead the higher life."

"Perhaps, if he remains unmarried. What kind of higher life is that in which one trembles at the butcher's bill, and eats out his heart thinking of the children's future? And, besides, your higher life, — what is it? Bah! Wine, love, song! Get what you can, and leave the gods the rest. It is their care, I suppose, — this 'rest,' whatever it is."

But he did call on Madeleine. Went to see her the very next day. Madeleine was alone, as it was one of Mrs. Longworthy's sick days, or, as she put it, one of those days when temper got the better of her.

Madeleine was not so unconstrained with him as with Arthur. Perhaps it was something in his look, — perhaps the memory of old childish quarrels. People very seldom take kindly in after-life to those who have teased them as children. She was colder than to Arthur, — asked but few questions of him, and turned the conversation on things general. Philip, in his unhappy way, chafed at his reception, because he knew how Arthur had been

welcomed, — putting it down as due to that fatal taint of blood.

"Do you like the army as a profession?" asked Madeleine.

"There is not much to like or dislike in it," he replied carelessly. "It does to carry one along."

"To carry one along, — yes, but not as the highest object of one's life, I suppose you mean?"

"I certainly did not mean that," replied Philip. "I know nothing about highest objects in life. My life consists in getting as much enjoyment as my income will admit. Very low aims, indeed, are they not?"

"Yes."

"At the same time, suppose I was to go in for the higher kind, — very odd thing, Arthur is always talking about the higher life, — I suppose I should do it because I enjoyed it best. Do you not think so?"

"Yes. But one ought not to be thinking about enjoyment."

"Pardon me, — I only said that one *does* think about enjoyment."

"There is duty, at least," said Madeleine.

"Yes, — my duties are light and easily fulfilled. When I have got through those, there is nothing left but to fill up the time, as I said, with as much amusement, enjoyment, frivolity, whatever you like, as my money will cover. As we are old acquaintances, Madeleine, it is just as well that I should not pretend to any thing but what I am. Now, tell me, if I may be impertinent, what you think I ought to do?"

"I don't know," she said. "Life is so terrible a thing at best, so full of responsibilities, of evils that must be faced, and dreadful things that cannot be suppressed, that I don't know what to say. It seems to me as if the whole duty of the rich man" —

"I am not a rich man."

"The man of leisure, the man of culture, were to throw himself among the people, and try to raise them" —

"You would make us all philanthropists, then?"

"I hardly know. If only — without societies and organizations — people would go among the poor and teach them, — help, without money, you know. But one can only do one's self what one feels right."

Here, at least, was a woman different from the type he had set up the preceding night, — different, too, from Laura.

"You are talking to a mere man of the world," said Philip, rising. "We have no ideas of duty, you know, only a few elementary rules of right and wrong, which we call the laws of honor. My friends, for

instance, always pay up after each event. On the other hand, it is dangerous to have to do with them in the matter of horses; and they will take any advantage that fairly offers in the way of a bet. We like gathering in club smoking-rooms, drinking good wine, smoking good cigars. We like to be well dressed, to do certain things well, such as riding, billiard-playing, and so forth" —

"But, Philip, does not this life tire you?"

"I assure you, not in the least. Greatly as I must fall in your eyes by the confession, I declare that I do not care one straw for my fellow-man. You tell me the people are starving. I say, there are poor-rates, rich men, and our luxurious staff of parsons, beadles, and relieving officers, to help them. You say they are badly taught. Where, then, are the schools? I meet with the poor man in the street, and read of him in the paper. He has, it appears to me, two phases in his character. He either fawns or bullies. He begs or tries to rob. I am told that he gets large wages in the summer, which he spends in drink, and has nothing left for the winter. If I were a poor man, and knew that I should be pitied by charitable people directly I was hard up, I should do just the same thing. What is the poor man to me? I owe him nothing. I do not employ him. I do not get rich by his labor. Therefore, you see, I am quite indifferent to his sufferings, quite awake to his vices, and quite careless about his virtues."

Madeleine looked at him with astonishment.

"You are frank, indeed," she said; "but believe me, you are quite wrong. I must teach you that the poor, whom you despise, are not worse than ourselves, — better than your friends, if I may say so, because they help each other, and have sympathy. Why are you so frank? Why have you told me so much about yourself?"

"Because I am anxious that you should know me as I am," replied Philip.

"But I am sorry you told me what you are. After all, you have exaggerated. I shall wait for a woman's love to soften you."

A wondrously softened look did pass over Philip's eyes. He was thinking of the girl whom he was to meet the next day.

"Love," he said, "the old story. If I am to be reformed, I would rather meet my fate that way than any other. Forgive my bluntness, Madeleine. You see, I do not belong to your world."

"But do belong to my world. It really is a better one than yours. Of course, we have our little faults; and we may be slow

for you, and sometimes — what is it, that quality for which the French have no word, because they never understand it? — what is it that people are when they not only do their duty but overdo it?"

"You mean your world is sometimes priggish."

"That is the word, — not a lady's word, I know; but Mrs. Longworthy tells me when I make mistakes. And this word does so beautifully fit its meaning. Yes, priggish. Only English and Germans are that, I cannot tell why. But come into my world."

Philip shook his head.

"You are on one side of the stream, and I am on the other; and the stream is widening. Arthur is on your side too. We can still talk. The time may come when the river will be so wide that we cannot even do that."

"I think I know what you mean," she replied. "Cross at once, and stay with us — with those who — who love you, in memory of old days."

"You cannot cross a river," he said, smiling, "without a bridge or a boat. Just at present I see none. The bridges are all higher up, behind me; and so are the boats. And the two paths are getting farther and farther apart. Good-by, Madeleine."

He left her with these words. Very oddly, they recall my illustration from the works of Pythagoras a few chapters back. That must be because "*les esprits forts se rencontentent*."

"Tell me," said Mrs. Longworthy, at dinner, "what kind of man is this Mr. Philip Durnford?"

"He is not so tall as Arthur, has black hair, a black mustache, and large, soft eyes, — almond-shaped eyes."

"Oh! Did you ever see eyes like his anywhere else?"

"Yes: they are like the eyes of the mullatoes in Palmiste."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Longworthy.

"He dresses very well, and he talks very well. Only, my dear Mrs. Longworthy, you know what I told you about the garden at Fontainebleau, when I saw it last."

"Yes."

"Well, Philip Durnford's mind is like that garden, — all overgrown with pumpkins."

"A lawyer," said Lynn, "who would have sent me some cases, has absconded with other people's money. That is all that has happened to me."

"He may possibly come back," said Jones. "My manager, who had accepted my play, is a bankrupt. Perhaps Setebos, who troubles every thing, ruined him to prevent the play coming out. I mourn for him."

"He was not fair to outward view;
He was not nice to see;
His loveliness I never knew
Until he smiled on me."

"As an honorary member of the Chorus," said Arthur, "I can hardly be expected to have any misfortunes, — consequently, I have none."

"This," said Venn, with a beaming face, "is quite like old times. I, too, have had my disappointment. I had spent the last twelve months in revising and polishing the *Opuscula*. They are now as complete as a Greek statue. I proposed them to a publisher. He kept my letter for a month, and then sent me a refusal. It is his loss pecuniarily, the world's loss intellectually."

"It is very sad," sympathized Jones. "And yet, I dare say, you would not exchange your literary fame for my dramatic glory?"

"One great compensation of affliction," Venn observed, "is the law of self-esteem. No man, whatever his drawbacks, would change with any other man. We admire ourselves for our very afflictions. We lie on our bed of torture till even the red-hot gridiron becomes a sort of spring mattress; and then we pity the poor devils grilling next to us. Following out this idea, as I intend to do, I shall write a life of that Jew whose teeth King John pulled out of day by day. I shall show that he rather enjoyed it as he got on, and looked for it every morning, till the teeth were all gone. Then he talked about it for the rest of his life. So, too, the old woman, who hugs her rheumatism to her heart."

"Ourselves are too much with us: late and soon,
Still at the mirror do we waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours.
We give ourselves our praise, — a sordid boon."

Jones made the above remark, which fell unnoticed.

"Another compensation," says Lynn, "may be got from the magnitude of misfortunes. To have had more funerals than anybody else confers a distinction on any woman. To have had more MSS. rejected than anybody else confers a distinction upon you, my dear Venn."

"Let us change the subject," Venn re-

CHAPTER XII.

LET us have," said Venn, trimming the lamps on Chorus night, "a cheerful evening. What fresh disappointment has any one to communicate?"

plied, with a blush, showing that he felt the delicacy of the compliment. "I have now to submit to the Chorus a scheme by which all our fortunes may be made."

He drew forth a bulky manuscript, tied with tape. They all rose, and began to look for their hats, with one accord.

Venn replaced the roll in the drawer with a sigh.

"You may sit down again," he said. "You will be sorry, some time, not to have heard the prolegomena to the scheme. But I will only read the prospectus. You are aware, perhaps, that a million a year is collected for the conversion of the blacks."

"It is a fact over which, in penniless moments, I have often brooded," said Jones.

"Then," said Venn triumphantly, "let us raise the same sum for converting the whites."

"What are we to convert them to?"

"I shall give nothing for converting anybody," Lynn growled.

"Don't talk like an atheist, Lynn; because this is a philanthropic scheme, and, besides, one out of which money may be made. We shall Christianize the world. We shall teach the people that their religion needs not consist in going to church every Sunday, and sometimes reading a 'chapter.' We shall begin with the House of Lords. There is a great field open among the peers and their families. The House of Commons, — which comes next upon my list — will, after a few years' labor among them, be so changed that the constituents won't know their own members again. No more putting into office because a man makes himself disagreeable out of it; no more bolstering a measure because it is brought forward by a minister; no more legislating for class interests; no more putting off for a better day. And, above all, a stern sense of Christian duty which will limit every speaker to ten minutes, like a Wesleyan preacher at a field-meeting. Next to the House of Commons, we shall take the Inns of Court. Oh, my readers!" —

"You are quite sure that you are not quoting from the prolegomena?" said Jones.

"Pardon me, — I was about to delight you with perhaps as fine a piece of declamation as you have ever heard. Now you shall not have it. The Inns of Court will be taken by a series of door-to-door visitations; and the missionaries, who will not be highly paid, will receive special allowances for repairs to that part of their dress most likely to be injured. If one converts a barrister, he shall be promoted to the conversion of the bench. If one converts a judge, he shall be still further promoted to the conversion of certain ex-Lord Chancellors. In the army, after a few months of our work, you will find so

great a change that the officer will actually work at his profession; the same rules will be maintained for officers as for men, — those about getting drunk, and so forth. And in the navy, similar good effects will be produced. The best results will be obtained in the trading-classes. For then the grocer will no more sand his sugar and mix his tea; the publican will sell honest drink; and all shall be contented with a modest profit."

"Of course," said Lynn, "the missionaries will behave in exactly the same way as if they were at Jubbulpore or Timbuctoo, — go in and out, uninvited; and, like district visitors, they will make any impertinent observations they please?"

"Of course; and the consequences will be part of the day's work."

"I quite approve of the scheme," said Jones. "Only, I don't see my own share in it."

"You are to be secretary, Jones. It is your name that we shall put forward."

"Then I retire."

"Do not, Jones, let a promising scheme be ruined at the very outset by an obstinate selfishness. What matters it if the world does scoff?"

But Jones was obdurate.

"Then, Jones, you shall have nothing, while Lynn and I will divide all the profits. I go on to a second theme. This will not be so lucrative, but still safe. It is nothing less, gentlemen, than the establishment of a Royal Literary College, — a college devoted to the art and mystery of writing, — not, understand, for the old and worn-out purposes of conveying thought, but for the modern purpose of conveying amusement."

"It sounds well," said Jones. "Of course, as it is the project of the Chorus, it will fail."

"Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?"

"And now listen to the prospectus, which you will find to be drawn up with great care."

"ROYAL LITERARY COLLEGE."

"The promoters of this institution, bearing in mind the enormous increase in the population, the consequent increase in the number of readers, and the necessity of providing for their daily, weekly, and monthly requirements, propose to establish a college expressly for the training of popular mediocrity. They have observed with pain, that, in spite of the efforts of able editors, a great deal of time is still spent in providing papers containing thought. And though a large number of these leaders of popular amusement care nothing for the merits of a paper, provided it be written by a well-known man, there are yet a few who

study to present their readers with what they require least, — food for reflection. Among other objects, it is proposed to prevent this lamentable waste of time and energy; and, in doing so, to anticipate the tastes of the age and the wants of the reading public. Literature, in fact, is to be reduced to a science. The increased demand for literary men by no means represents an increased supply of genius. On the contrary, the promoters are of serious opinion that genius was never at so low an ebb as at present, and the art of writing upon nothing, although it has not yet been systematically taught, never at so high a pitch. In order to convince themselves of this, the promoters, by means of a sub-committee, have carefully studied the whole popular literature of the last twelve months. They are happy in being able to report that there has not been, so far as their labors have permitted them to discover, a single new truth introduced to the British public, not a single good thing said, nothing old newly set, and not one good poem by a new man. This they consider highly satisfactory and gratifying. And it is in the hope of perpetuating, improving, and extending this state of things, that they desire to found the Royal Literary College.

“In the ordinary course of events, it cannot be but that an occasional genius will arise. Should such appear by any accident among the students of the college, he will be promptly and firmly expelled. But the college will gladly welcome any one, of either sex, who, having a quick memory and a facile pen, is quite justified in considering himself a genius; and every allowance will be made for the weaknesses of humanity, should any student give himself, or herself, the airs of genius.

“As students of both sexes will be admitted within the college, the promoters, considering how great a stimulus poverty is to work, will encourage, by every means in their power, early marriages. In case of husband and wife being both students, arrangements will be made to enable them to starve together, with their innocent progeny, outside the college walls. No chaplain will be appointed, as the promoters desire to consider the college quite undenominational. In deference, however, to popular opinion, a chapel will be built, in which service will be held on Sundays, in as many Christian denominations as time permits. The hall will be set apart for the more advanced thinkers, who will not, however, be allowed to smoke during the delivery of orations.

“The great festivals of the college will be Commemoration Day, Old Dramatist Day, Old Chronicle Day, Scandalous

Chronicle and Memoirs Day, Horace Walpole Day, Boswell Day, and French Play Day. On these days will be celebrated the names of those great men who, by their writings, have furnished models for copying, or provided storehouses for plagiarists. Every student will be expected to produce a panegyric in his own line. Those which, in the opinion of the examiners, have most merit — from the Literary College point of view — will be printed and kept for one month. The successful students will read them out in the college hall; but no one will be compelled to listen.

“There will be no holidays or vacations. Every student will absent himself as often as he pleases. On Sundays, conveyances will be provided for intending excursionists.

“The college library will not, on any account, receive the works of the college students.

“In the examinations for scholarships and degrees, if any composition, in the eyes of the examiners, should be found to partake of the nature of philosophy, research, or erudition; or should the reading of any composition demand the exercise of thought; or should any reflect on the glory and dignity of light literature, the offender shall be publicly reprimanded, and, on a repetition of the offence, shall be disgracefully expelled. No objection will be made to the offering up of prayers for any erring student.

“The college will be divided into several sections. These, which are not yet quite settled, will be somewhat as follows:—

“I. POETRY. — Students will be recommended to take a year's course at this, after the regular three years at any of the other branches. Several gentlemen will be invited to lecture from time to time. Mr. Browning on the Art of Obscurity and Apparent Depth; also on the Art of going on Forever. Mr. Swinburne on the Attractiveness of the Forbidden, and on the Melody of the English Language. Mr. Tupper on Catching a Weasel Asleep, applied to the British public. Mr. Buchanan on the Art of Self-laudation. Mr. Rossetti on the Mystery of Mediæval Mummers; also on the Fleshly School and on the Art of Poetical Pretension. Mr. Tennyson on quite a new subject: The Yawning of Arthur; or, Guinevere Played Out.

“The students will be required to read the mortal and perishable works of some of these poets. They will also be examined in the poems of Southey, Cowper, the imitations of Pope, and the magazine poetry of the day, particularly that which decorates the monthlies.

“II. The second branch will be the writing of essays. It is, of course, superfluous to say that A. K. H. B. will be invited to undertake the department of commonplace and Glorified Twaddle. He will be assisted, provided their services can be secured, by the authors of the monthly magazine essays. A large number of clergymen, including the Master of the Temple and several of the bench of bishops, will be asked to instruct in reeling off ‘goody’ talk by the foot or yard, as required, for religious papers.

“Certain essay writers will be excluded altogether, — among them will be Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes; while but a sparing use will be allowed of Sir Arthur Helps.

“The authors from whom cribbing will be recommended are Steele, Addison, Goldsmith, and Johnson. Montaigne will also be largely used.

“III. HISTORICAL ARTICLES. — This department is exceedingly difficult to arrange. It is hoped that Canon Kingsley may be induced to give a lecture on the Historical Forgiveness of Sins, based on that celebrated essay of his where he has shown that Raleigh’s sins were forgiven because a baby was born unto him. He may also be asked to give over again his Cambridge course. The gentleman who writes the weekly articles in “The Saturday,” abusing Mr. Froude, will be invited to illustrate the method of establishing a raw, and always pegging at it. He will also be asked to give a lecture on Mr. Freeman, called “Moi et Moimême.” But the arrangements for the historical course are not yet completed, and the promoters beg for further time.

“IV. We come next to leading articles. On this head it will only be observed here that the paper which has the largest circulation, whatever that may be, will be chosen as the model. “The Saturday,” “The Spectator,” “The Examiner,” and a few other papers which occasionally address the intellect, will be excluded from consideration.

“V. The department of novels will receive the most careful attention and the most profound study. All the students, without any exception, will be required to pass through it; and no student shall receive a degree, a diploma, or any certificate of honor, until he has produced a three-volume novel, complete, finished, and ready for the publisher. The professor of the branch should be, if he will undertake the duties, Mr. Anthony Trollope. There will

be lecturers to point out the secrets of manufacture in all the sub-divisions: the principal of these will be the religious novel, in which the works of Miss Yonge and Miss Wetherell will, of course, form the most useful guides to the student. Lord Lytton will serve for the student of the sentimental, the political, and the highly-colored unreal. There will be several forms of the muscular novel, including the rollicking, the Christian hero, the sentimental, the pint-pewter crushing, and the remorseful. Ouida, Miss Broughton, Charles and Henry Kingsley, and Mr. Lawrence, will be the chosen models for this sub-division.

“For the sensational, there can be but one model.

“For the plain work of the department, the mere story-telling, with puppets for characters, of course Mr. Wilkie Collins will be the guide.

“If there *should* be any student who would rashly propose to make a picture of real life, he will be set to study Charles Reade; but not in the college, from which Mr. Reade’s works will be excluded.

“The promoters will have great pleasure in receiving tenders and designs for a building. Names of candidates will be received at once by the secretary, Mr. Hartley Venn, M.A.”

“There!” said Venn, “what do you think of that?” He sat down, and wiped his forehead. “I have thought of you both. You, Lynn, shall be the standing counsel, with a large retaining fee. You, Jones, shall be professor of the dramatic art. You will observe, that, out of regard to your feelings, I abstained from mentioning this department. I myself shall be the first warden, with a salary of £2,000 a year.”

CHAPTER XIII.

MADELEINE’S world and the two worlds of the “boys,” as she called them, were all three wide enough apart. Woman-like, she tried to bring them into her own groove, and began by asking them to dinner. Arthur went with a sort of enthusiasm. The queenly beauty and the imperiousness of the young lady — so great a contrast to his own shrinking indecision — fired his imagination. In her he saw something of what he himself might have been but for his fatal shyness. Philip went too, at first unwillingly, but presently with a pleasure which astonished him. His pastime seemed to be to rouse the spirit of an-

tagonism in Madeleine; and he delighted to rouse her to wrath by opposing to her enthusiasm the cold barrier of cynical selfishness.

"If it were not," she said one night, — "if it were not that I know you exaggerate your opinions, I should hate you."

"Do not hate me," Philip answered; "because hatred is an active passion. I dislike a lot of people; but I never take the trouble to hate anybody, — not even a bore."

"Then, do not talk as if self was the only thing in the world."

"I must, Madeleine, if I talk at all. You would not have silence at your table, would you? And Arthur never says any thing. Arthur has made a wonderful discovery, which is going to cover him with glory. Has he told you?"

"No. What is it, Arthur?"

Arthur blushed vividly.

"It is only a point of archæological interest," he said. "There has been a dispute in the Archæological Institute for years about the number of buttons that went to the shirt of mail, and I have at last been enabled to settle the question."

"There," said Philip triumphantly, "what did I tell you?"

Madeleine sighed. It seemed to her so sad that one of the boys should openly worship self, and the other should fritter away his time in the pursuit of useless knowledge.

In the course of the evening she delivered an animated oration on the subject, while Mrs. Longworthy slumbered by the fire. The boys stood before her, each in his turn receiving punishment; Philip enjoying it above all things, and Arthur, because he saw that she was in earnest, with blushes and shame.

"It is all true, Madeleine, every word," he said.

"So it is," said Philip. "We are a disgraceful pair."

"You are the worse, Philip, by far," went on the fair preacher, "when I look at you, and think what you might be doing" —

"See, now, Madeleine," Philip said: "tell us exactly what we can do, and we will have a try at it. The care of other people may possibly have a charm in it which is unknown to us at present. Who knows? I may yet be preaching on a tub, while Arthur collects half-pence in his hat. I fancy I see him now."

"You turn every thing serious into ridicule."

"Seriously," Arthur said, "my life is wasted. I suppose antiquarian research is useless to the world. I am afraid, however, I shall never quite give it up. What can

I do? Do you want any money for your objects, Madeleine?"

"No — no — no," she replied impatiently. "How often am I to tell you that the real work of charity is done without money? Now, listen, and I will tell you what a man of leisure should do. It is the interest of everybody that the condition of the poor should be raised, — by schools, by giving them instruction in the arts of life, by giving them sufficient wages for good work, by maintaining their self-respect."

Philip began to groan softly.

"I will come to what I mean most." She blushed a little, and went on: "I have got a friend, a middle-aged woman, who gives all her life to the care of a certain house, where she receives and finds work for women. We give them as much work as they can do, at a fair price. We ask no questions, — we form no society. Some of them live in the house, others in the neighborhood. We do not let them work all day, and we give them instruction in housework, in medicine, and all sorts of things that may be useful to them when they marry, as most of them do."

"I suppose," said Philip the irrepressible, "they are driven to church three times every Sunday."

"Not at all. We never interfere with their religion. Some of them are pious; some, I suppose, are not. We have one broad principle, — that our work shall not be mixed up with religion in any way."

"Good."

"And what do you do with their work?"

"It goes to a shop which belongs to us. We can sell as cheaply as any other, in spite of our high wages; because, you see, there is no middle-man."

"Madeleine, you are a radical."

"I know nothing about that. I am determined to do what I can to have women properly paid. All that come to me shall get work, even if we lose, — though I think we shall not lose by it, — so long as I have any money left. Now, you two can help me."

"I have never learned to sew," said Philip, looking at his fingers.

"The girls and women have got brothers and sons. We cannot find work for them, too, but we want to get up a night-school. Will you come down and teach?"

They looked at each other with alarm.

"Of course we will," said Arthur, "if you wish it."

"Then come to-morrow."

They went.

It was in Westminster that Madeleine's "house" stood; properly speaking, three or four small houses knocked into one.

They went with her at seven o'clock, both feeling horribly ill at ease.

She took them up stairs into a room made out of two, by taking down the wall between, where a dozen boys were assembled, under the care of a young man whose pale cheeks and thin figure concealed a vast amount of courage and enthusiasm. With him, — a young martyr to the cause which yearly kills its soldiers, — we have here nothing to do.

'This is our school,' said Madeleine. "Mr. Hughes, these two gentlemen will try to do something for us, if you will put them in the way."

Mr. Hughes bowed, but looked suspiciously at his two new assistants.

"Come, gentlemen," he said, "there are your pupils, — the more advanced boys. Mine are down below."

He divided the boys into two sets, one at either end; giving Philip care of one, and Arthur that of the other.

"You will be firm, gentlemen," he whispered. "Don't let any single step be taken to destroy discipline. We have to be very careful here. Here are books for you."

He gave Philip a geography, and Arthur a little book containing hints or lectures on all sorts of elementary subjects, chiefly connected with laws of health, rules of life, and of simple chemical laws. Arthur sat down mechanically, and turned pale when he opened the book; for of science he was as ignorant as the pope himself. In a few moments Philip came over to him.

"What have you got, Arthur?"

"Here's science, — what am I to do with it?"

"I don't know. I've got geography. What am I to do with that?"

"Draw a map on a board, and tell them something about a country. Any thing will do."

Philip went back and faced his class. They were a sturdy, dirty-faced lot of young gamins, all whispering together, and evidently intent on as much mischief as could be got out of the new teacher. Behind him was a blackboard and a piece of chalk.

"What country shall we take, boys?" he asked, with an air of confidence, as if all were alike to him.

"Please, sir, yesterday we had Central Africa, and Mr. Hughes told us a lot about travellers there. Let's have some more about Livingstone."

Philip was not posted up in Livingstone. He shook his head, and tried to think of a country he knew something about. Suddenly a bright thought struck him.

"Did you ever hear of Palmiste Island, boys?"

They never had.

"By Jove," thought Philip, "I shall get on splendidly now."

As he was drawing his map of the island, he heard Arthur, in a hesitating voice, beginning to describe the glory of the heavens; and nearly choked, because he was certain that five minutes would bring him to grief.

He began to talk as he drew his map, describing the discovery of the island, the first settlers, and their hardships; and then, warming to his subject, he told all about sugar-making and coffee-planting. From time to time Arthur's voice fell upon his ear; but he was too busy drawing his map, and decorating the corners of the board with fancy sketches, illustrating the appearance of the people, niggers' heads, Chinese carrying pigs, — for Phil sketched very fairly, — and he did not look up. Presently he turned round. All Arthur's boys had deserted their instructor, and come over to him, while their unhappy lecturer, in silence, sat helpless in his chair, book in hand. As for his own boys, they were all on the broad grin, enjoying the lesson highly.

Philip stopped.

"I say," he said, "this won't do, you know. Go back, you boys, to your own end."

"He ain't no good, that teacher," said one of the boys, with a derisive grin.

Arthur shook his head mournfully. There was something touching in his attitude, sitting all alone, with his book in his hand. Perhaps Arthur had never felt so humiliated in his life before. It was perfectly true: he was no good. In the brief five minutes during which he lectured, he made more mistakes in astronomical science than generally falls to the lot of man to make in a lifetime. Some of the boys, who had been to national schools, found him out in a moment, and openly expressed their contempt before seceding to the other end of the room.

"He ain't no good, that teacher," said the boy. "You go on with your patter. We're a-listenin' to you. Draw us some more pictures. Make a white man latherin' a nigger."

"Obsairve," as a friend of ours would say, the instinctive superiority of race.

"Boys," said another, rising solemnly, "this one ain't no good neither. He's a-gammonin' of us. There ain't no such place. I sha'n't stay here to be gammoned on."

He was about four feet nothing in his boots, this young Hampden. Phil, cut to the heart by the ignominy of the thing, caught him a box of the ears that laid him sprawling. The urchin raised a howl, and,

falling back upon his friends, pulled the form over with him, so that the whole row of a dozen fell together. The yells were terrific for a moment; and then, seized by a common impulse, the boys grasped their caps, and fled down the stairs like one boy.

"Arthur!" said Philip.

"Philip!" said Arthur.

"You never experienced any thing like this before, I suppose?"

"Never."

Just then Madeleine herself appeared, followed by Mr. Hughes. All the forms lay on the floor; for, in the brief moment of tumult, every boy had seized the opportunity of contributing something to the noise; and at either end of the room stood one of her new allies. Arthur, with his arms helplessly dangling, holding the unlucky book of science, Philip trying with his pocket-handkerchief to rub out some of the pictures.

Madeleine looked from one to the other.

"Take this wretched book, somebody," said Arthur, as if the volume chained him to the spot. "Do take the book."

Mr. Hughes took the book, and Arthur turned to Madeleine.

"It's a failure, Madeleine," he said, with a sad sigh. "They only laughed at me."

"And what have you been doing, Philip?"

"I've been getting on capitally," he said, trying to efface the pig and the Chinaman.

"I've been giving a lesson on geography."

"Illustrated," said Mr. Hughes quietly, pointing to the pig.

"Yes, illustrated. I've been telling the boys about Palmiste, Madeleine; and they actually refused to believe there is any such place."

"Is much mischief done, Mr. Hughes?" asked Madeleine.

The question was like a box on the ear to both. They looked at each other, and Philip began to laugh.

"Honestly, Madeleine," he said, "I am very sorry. We have done our best. I thought we should have to give a lesson, and was not prepared to give a lecture."

"Never mind, sir," said Mr. Hughes. "I dare say we shall soon mend matters; and perhaps your pictures amused the children."

"You may take me home, both of you," said Madeleine.

She said no more, though she was greatly disappointed at the failure of her scheme.

"Madeleine," said Philip in the carriage, "I am inclined to think, that, on the whole, I can serve my fellow-creatures best by not teaching them."

"Try me again, Madeleine," Arthur whispered.

CHAPTER XIV.

SETTLING down in most respectable lodgings, in Keppel Street, Russell Square, with a clear six months before him of no anxiety for the next day's dinner, Mr. MacIntyre felt at first more elation than becomes a philosopher. We must excuse him. When a man has had seven years of shifts, hardly knowing one day what the next would be like, racking his brain for contrivances to keep the wolf from the door, busy with never-ending combinations for the transference of cash from other people's pockets to his own, a clear holiday of six months seems almost like an eternity.

After a few days of seclusion and whiskey toddy, Mr. MacIntyre awoke to the conclusion that something would have to be done. Reason once more asserted her sway. His first idea was to take pupils; and accordingly he invested a small sum in second-hand books, another in reports and examinations, and another sum in advertisements. No pupils came at all. Another thing he did was to go to a lawyer, and instruct him to write a certain letter to a firm of lawyers in Palmiste. They were directed to search the register of marriages at the Church of St. Joseph for that of George Durnford with Marie; to make a formal and attested copy of it, and to send it to London, — the whole being strictly secret and confidential.

And then, this being fairly put into hand, as he found he had a good deal of time upon his hands, he began to spend it chiefly in the society of Philip, watching him closely, getting his secrets out of him, communicating his opinions, trying to get a real influence over him.

"Obsaivre," said the philosopher one night to Philip himself, "there are some kinds of men who go uphill or downhill, according as they are shoved. They have no deliberate choice in the matter; because, if they had, they would prefer the better path. While they are hesitating, some one comes and gives them a gentle shove downwards."

"What is the meaning of all this, MacIntyre?" asked Philip, ignorant of the application.

"Ay, ay — the wise man talks in parables, and is understood not. Ye've heard of Mr. Baxter, and his 'Shove to Heavy Christians,' Phil? He was a sagacious man. There may as well be shovers up as shovers down. I do what I can, but it's vera little, — vera little, indeed. In me, my pupil, you behold an up-shover; in yourself, — one who is shoved upwards."

In his easy way, having very few friends

and long leave, Philip fell back a good deal on MacIntyre. First, the man amused him; then he took pleasure in his company, because he flattered him; thirdly, he fell into the snares of a will stronger than his own, and confided every thing to him. MacIntyre, not by any means a deep, designing villain, had yet a game of his own to play. He read the character of his expupil, and began to consider his own plan almost as good as carried out.

"See," he seemed to say, while he and Philip sat opposite each other in the evening, smoking and talking,—"see how goodly are the fruits in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea. Let me give you a friendly shove in that direction. Obsaivre, how sickly is the perfume—how faint the odor of the Jericho rose. Truly, the apples of the plain are better than the grapes of Eshcol. I have been myself, all my life, in search of these fruits; unsuccessfully, I admit, through no fault of mine; for I had no scruples. I fought for my own hand. I was a beggar born; and, because circumstances were too strong for me, I am a beggar now, at fifty-three. But mine is the true road, and your philosopher knows no scruples."

Phil's secrets were simple. The young fellow was in debt, of course, but not badly. More than half of his little fortune was gone. He always had a heavy balance against him in his speculative transactions. Worse than this, he was in love.

All these things considered together, Mr. MacIntyre was, perhaps, justified in rubbing his hands at night. What did he do, though, with those two or three bits of yellow paper which he was always reading, holding to the light and examining, before he put them up again in the dirty old pocket-book which he carried inside his waistcoat?

"I think," he murmurs, "that in three months, or six at most, it may be done. It shall be done. The pear will be ripe. Bah! it must drop into my hands."

He talked over the love matter. That was the most pressing business.

"Ye cannot do it, Phil," he said: "it's beneath yourself."

"Nonsense," said Philip, coloring. "I can make no mésalliance."

"Pardon me, you can. And if you knew all—Obsaivre, young man, he who"—

"I know, I know. Do not philosophize. I suppose you cannot imagine such a thing as love, MacIntyre?"

"No, I think not. I've been married, though; so I know very well what is not love."

"I believe you have been every thing," said Philip.

"Most things I certainly have; and most things I have made notes of. As, for instance, that the British officer, does not, as a rule, marry the girl of inferior position whom"—

"MacIntyre, stop!" cried Philip. "Do not try me too far. I have been a gambler, if you like—a profligate—any thing you like to call me; but I swear that I never had that sin laid to my conscience."

"Aweel, aweel," said MacIntyre. "Was I tempting you? You apply a general proposition to a particular case. A most illogical race the English always were."

He changed the subject, but kept on recurring to it, night after night; while Philip, meeting Laura but once a week or so, was daily growing more and more passionately in love with the girl.

"A marriage beneath your station, Philip," he said one night enigmatically, "would be madness to you, just now."

"And why just now?"

"Because you will have to take your proper place; give up the soldiering, and become a country gentleman; that is, as soon as you like to hold out your hand and ask."

"What is the man talking about?"

"Never mind—we can wait. Mind, I say nothing about the young leddy."

"She is too good for me."

"Na doot, na doot. They always are. She's all that you imagine, of course, and more behind it; but after a month, ye'd wish ye hadn't done it. Eh, what a pity that there is nothing short of marriage! Hand-fasting would be something."

It was the second time he had thrown out this hint. This time Philip did not spring from his chair. He only looked at him thoughtfully, and shook his head.

"I must have her, MacIntyre—I must have her. Only this morning I saw her. See, here is a lock of her pretty hair. How soft it is, the dear little lock that I cut off with her own scissors! and here is her face in my locket. Look at it,—you, with your fifty years of cold philosophy,—and warm your blood for a moment. Think of what you would have been, if you had met her when you were young, when you were five and twenty! Eh, Mephistopheles? Did you ever have any youth?"

"I'll tell you about my youth some other day," returned the preceptor,— "not now. Well, it's a bonny face, a bonny face; and a good face too."

"By Heaven, sir," Philip went on, "there's no woman like her,—not one."

"There is none like her, none,
Nor shall be till our summers have deceased."

You know, you know —

'Her sweet voice ringing up to the sunny sky,
Till I well could weep for myself, so wretched
and mean,
And a lover so sordid and base.'

It isn't quite right: but never mind. I feel the touch of her fingers in mine this moment, man of the icy veins. I tell you that I feel the warm blush on her cheek when I kissed her; I hear the sweet tones of her voice, — the loveliest and sweetest you ever heard. And she trusts me," he went on, with a sort of sob, — "she trusts me, and thinks I am good. Good! She is not happy with the secret, poor child. She longs to tell Mr. Venn, who is a friend of Arthur's, all about it."

"And has she told Mr. Venn?" cried MacIntyre, greatly excited.

"Why, no. I tell her not to."

"Don't let her, Phil. Keep it secret. Whatever you do, don't let Mr. Venn know."

Phil was in a hot fit that night, and MacIntyre let him down with his simple remonstrance.

Next day he was despondent, because things looked badly for a horse he had backed. He began again. Philip answered surily, —

"I am going to marry her, pillar of Presbyterian scrupulosity. My mind is made up."

"I knew a man once," said MacIntyre, filling his tumbler with brandy and water, "much in your predicament. He was in love with a girl beneath him."

"Now you are going to invent some lies of your own," said Philip.

MacIntyre half rose.

"Sir, do not insult your own guest. If it was not for — for this full glass of grog, I'd go at once."

"No, no, — I beg your pardon. Go on with your parable."

"It is no parable. Truth, sir, — plain, unvarnished truth, will always be found better than parable. This, sir," tapping his breast, "is a wholesale dépôt of truth. I knew the man of whom I am telling you well. A friend of his had been once an ordained Presbyterian minister. He said to him, 'I will marry you privately. The marriage is perfectly good north of the Tweed. What it is south, I do not know. It will be time to raise the question after the ceremony is completed.' Well, Philip, they were married. My friend performed the service in his own house. The question has never been raised, and never will be raised, because the marriage turned out happily — in consequence of the demise of the ledly."

"Is that true?" Philip asked.

"Quite true. I was the man who married them."

Mr. MacIntyre's powers of fiction are already too well known for me to waste any time in comment upon this speech. No tear, I have reason to believe, blotted that falsehood from the paper where it was taken down.

"I was the man," said Alexander the Great without a blush.

"Were you ever in orders, — you?" asked Phil.

"I, — why not? I was ordained, called, set aside, whatever you call it. It is true that I was young and inexperienced."

"Good Lord, what a man it is!"

"I began by preaching in Edinburgh; but I failed in my very first appearance. They said I wanted unction. I don't know what I wanted. I had learned my discourse by heart the day before. Unfortunately, I took too much on the Saturday night; and in the morning, what with the whiskey and what with the position, and the sermon half forgotten, I fear I made but a poor appearance in the pulpit, a sort o' stickit minister. I never preached there again."

"What did you do next?"

"They wanted a missionary for the Jews in Constantinople. I went there. I staid seven years. I converted three Jews, who, as I afterwards found, had been converted by all my predecessors in turn. They did not cost much; and, as their names were always changed, they helped to make up the quarterly report. However, I had to give that work up; and I believe my three converts all relapsed. Eh! the hundreds of pounds those three rascals cost our country. I say nothing, Phil; but you will think over my parable, as you please to call it. Mind, I believe the marriage was perfectly legal. You may find out afterwards, whatever you please. Remember, the Church of Scotland is not yet disestablished. It is as respectable as your own church."

"Truly," said Philip, saluting him.

"I say, sir," repeated the reverend divine, "it is as respectable as yours. Otherwise, I should not be in it."

"Quite so," said Philip, — "quite so."

"My friend, you see," he went on, "argued thus, by my advice: 'If I choose, I can at any time investigate the question of legality. On the other hand, my wife will always believe herself married. There will be no question of a very ugly word, because the Church will have done her part. A blessed thing it is, Philip, that there is a church to protect the world.'"

He stopped for a moment, and took a

sip of half a pint or so of brandy and water. Then his speech became suddenly thick.

"A real-a-tool-a 'lessed 'spensation of Providence. What that friend of mine, in love and all with most beautiful creech', would have done without th' Church, 'impossible to say." He steadied himself with an effort. "Phil, my dear boy, brandy always makes me ill. Gi' me a ma' hat, ye blettherin' deevil, telling your stories, and keeping your old tutor out of bed, Gi' me ma hat, and le' me go. I'll tell ye the rest to-morrow."

Philip, left alone, began to meditate. The evil suggestion of his tempter lay at his heart like a seedling waiting to put forth its leaves. There was, over and above the other difficulties of the position, that of living if he were to marry. A very considerable slice of the five thousand was gone, that was quite clear. About the rest he was not quite clear, but there could not be much.

"What matters?" he murmured. "I will sell out, and we will do something,—love like the birds, by gad. But I must and will have the girl."

He took out the locket again, and looked at the face which lay in it, with its bright, innocent smile. As he looked, his face softened.

"It is a shame," he said, "a shame! That scoundrel, MacIntyre. No, child, no, I will never wrong you."

CHAPTER XV.

PHIL, you see, was born for better things. His heart was open to all noble impulses, as his eye and his ear were attuned to all harmonies of color and sound. He had a quick appreciation, could take a broad view of things. He knew his own powers; for men no more really deceive themselves on the score of intellect than women on that of beauty. If a man has brains, he knows it. I reserve the rights of those that are not clever and know it, and pretend to be, and are proud of their pretensions. These are the men who go about the world with all the letters of the alphabet after their names, imposing more upon themselves than on the credulous public. There is yet another difference to be made. Some few men are proud of the *εὐέργεια*, and many men are proud of the *δύναμις*. The pride of potentiality lingers long after the power of real work has altogether gone, long after the regret that tinges the first twenty years of an idle man's life. You may see, at Oxford and Cambridge, old

men who walk erect and proud, still flushed with the triumphs they achieved as boys, and proud still as men; though their strength has been measured against no other competitors, and in no larger battlefield, and though the men they once defeated have long since conquered in far greater struggles, while they have grown rusty over the combination port.

Philip was now at the age when regret is strongest. At no time do the possibilities of life appear so splendid as at twenty-five, or is the conscience quicker to reproach us for wasted opportunities. But, after all, what was he to do? Life is but a vague thing to a young subaltern of distinct ambitions, not clearly seeing what glorious path to take up. Often enough it becomes a merely ignoble thing, meaning billiards, betting, brandy and soda, *et talia*. In Phil's case, the life he led was telling on his face, broadening his features, giving them a coarse expression. Our lives are stamped upon our faces. Does there not come a time in every good man's life when the hardest and unloveliest of faces softens into beauty by reason of the victory within? Do not buy a "nose machine," unlovely reader. Have patience, and aim at the highest things; and one day your face, too, shall be beautiful. As for Adonis, if he had lived the life of men about town, his face would have been coarse as theirs before the age of thirty.

The colored blood had something to do with it. It helped to make Philip at once sensitive, eager of distinction, and vain. But not every thing. Fain would I put it all down to color. Mighty comforting thing as it is to us white men to reflect on our superiority, we must be careful about the theory. We may be the aristocracy of Nature. To be sure, the creature who walks about in the similitude of man, with the leg in the middle of the foot; whose calf is in front, and shin behind; whose lips are thick; whose hair is woolly; whose nose is flat; whose brain is small in front and big behind; who has had every chance, and has clearly shown that he can do nothing so well as the white man,—the full-blooded negro, I say, must be regarded as a distant cousin, a poor relation of humanity, and not a "brudder" at all. But as for the mulatto class, I don't know. Take a good quadroon mother, and a good white father, and I really cannot see why the resulting octoroon is a whit inferior to our noble selves,—the aristocrats by color.

But the influence of color is always bad. It helped to make Philip inferior to himself. Let it be remembered about our Phil, the backslider, that, till he was twelve years old and more, he had been accustomed to

look on color as the outward mark of a degraded race.

It is all part of the same question. Take the heir of all the Talbots — I mean nothing personal to the heir of this distinguished house. Rear him in pride of birth, in contempt for low-born people, in ideas of the responsibilities and dignities of rank, you will turn out a creature whom the whole world cannot match for pride, self-respect, self-reliance, and the virtues of courage, pluck, and endurance, which depend on these.

But take the little *Echo* boy. Suppose he had been subjected from infancy to the same teaching and treatment, would there have been any difference?

Mr. MacIntyre would have replied, "I, vera much doot it."

"The future of a boy, sir," Venn said one evening, "may be entirely prophesied from an observation of his early habits and prejudices. I have gathered, for instance, a few particulars from the boyhood of great men, which throw a wonderful light upon their after-career. When I tell you, for example, that Mr. John Stuart Mill, early in life, had to submit his nails to a disfiguring course of bitter almonds to cure him of biting them, you feel at once that you understand the whole of the philosopher's works."

"I do not, for one," said Jones.

"I have also heard," he went on, "that Mr. Gladstone was birched more than once for cutting Sunday chapel at Eton. Remark that the years pass over his head, and presently he disestablishes the Irish Church. And I believe it is a fact that Mr. Disraeli, as a boy, was wont to sit on a rail, and suck sweets. The analogies between these small circumstances and the after-lives of these men are subtle perhaps, but, once pointed out, ought to be clear even to Jones."

It was on another occasion that Venn showed how an apology might be made for a criminal on higher ground than that reached by the evidence. He delivered his "Oratio pro Peccatore" one night in wig and gown. The following is a portion: —

"Circumstances, my lud, have been against my unhappy client. Brought up under the contempt, or fancied contempt, of society, he early manifested his superiority to the ordinary trammels imposed on the thick-headed by becoming a prig. I do not mean assistant masters of Rugby or Marlborough, who are all prigs, but the common prig of the London streets. From a prig of Holborn, the transition was easy to being a prig on a larger scale and in a more extended sphere. Step by step, my

lud, and gentlemen of the jury, you may trace every thing back, not to the want of education, because my client was taught in a National School, and possesses even now a knowledge of the Kings of Israel, but to the fact, that, in the circles wherein he should have moved, his parentage was despised, — his father, gentlemen of the jury, having been a barrister at law, and his mother at one time a lady of the ballet."

And with this as a preface, he would go on to defend his client.

You may leave out the preceding, if you like; but I would rather you read it.

Meantime, it is the month of May, —

"Ce fut en très doux tenz de Mai,
Que di cuer gai,
Vont eis oiseillon chantant,"

as the old French song has it. Laura has met Philip in all about six or seven times — always with another promise of secrecy. She is to marry Philip. That is agreed upon between them. It will please Mr. Venn. Meantime, she is trying to understand her lover. He is kind to her, but not with the tenderness of her guardian to whom she compares him. He is not gentle with her; but passionate, fitful, uncertain of temper, being, indeed, in constant conflict with himself. Then he was suspicious and jealous. Worse than all, he was always asking her if she loved him more, if she loved him at all, if she ever could love him. It wearied and teased her, — this talk of love. "What did it mean?" she asked herself over and over again, but could find no answer.

"I don't know, Philip," she said. "What is the use of always asking?"

"You must know if you love me, Laura."

"How am I to know?"

"Do you love Mr. Venn?"

"Oh, yes!" — her face lit up at once; "but I don't feel at all like that — oh, not in the least bit! If that is love, why I suppose I do not love you."

Philip ground his teeth.

"Always Mr. Venn," he growled. "Tell me, Laura, do you like to be with me?"

"Yes, it is pleasant — so long as you are in a good temper — to talk to you. I like you a great deal better than when I saw you first. I don't think you are such a good man as you ought to be, because I have heard you swear, which is vulgar."

"You shall make me good, when we are married."

"And when will that be?" she asked suddenly. "Because, you see, I will not go on having secrets from Mr. Venn; and I must tell him soon."

"Then, you will give me up," said Philip gloomily.

"Very well," she returned calmly; "that will be better than deceiving Mr. Venn. To be sure, I am only deceiving him with the idea of pleasing him. Of course he will be pleased." She sighed. "If only I felt *quite* sure! But he told me so distinctly that I was to marry a gentleman. Oh, he will be pleased! and I am sure he will like you."

"Only wait a little longer, my dear."

"No, Philip, I will not wait any longer. We must be married at once, or I will tell Mr. Venn all about it. I cannot bear to have secrets from him. I believe, after all, you are only laughing at me, because I am not a lady."

The tears of vexation came into her eyes.

Philip's face was very gloomy. It was in his moments of anger that the cloud fell upon his face which altered his expression, and changed him almost to a negro. It was then that his nostrils seemed to broaden, his lips to project, his cheeks to darken.

"Tell him, then," he returned; "and good-by."

He turned on his heel: it was under the trees in Kensington Gardens. She sat down, and looked at him. There was no anger in her breast for the *spretæ injuria formæ*: none at the loss of a love, none at the destruction of an idol; for she had no love. Philip Durnford had never touched her heart. To please Mr. Venn — let us say it again and again — to please Mr. Venn, who wanted to see her married to a gentleman, and because she was wholly, utterly ignorant of the world and innocent of its ways, she listened to Philip's pleading, and almost offered herself to him in marriage. What did marriage mean? She knew nothing. How was she to know? She spoke to no one but Hartley Venn. She never read novels or love-poetry. Her life was as secluded as that of any nun.

Her lover was three or four yards off, when his expression changed as suddenly to his old one. He wavered, and half turned.

"Philip," cried Laura, "come here."

He turned, and stood before her.

"I think I have made a great mistake. Perhaps Mr. Venn would not be pleased. Let us say good-by, and go away from each other forever. You will soon forget me; and, before I listen to any one again, I will take Mr. Venn's advice."

She spoke in a businesslike tone, as if the whole thing was a mere matter of expediency; and shook her head with an air of the most owl-like wisdom, and looked more

beautiful than ever. It was one of the characteristics of this young lady that she had as many different faces as there are thoughts in the brain; for she changed with each. I think her best was when she was playing in the evening — far away, in imagination, in some paradise of her own — alone with Mr. Venn.

Philip's blood leaped up in his veins. All the love and desire he had ever entertained for her seemed multiplied tenfold. He seized her hand, and held it fast.

"My Laura!" he cried, "my little bird, my pet! Do you think I will let you go? At least, not till I have had another chance. It is all finished, — all the waiting and hoping. I am ready to marry you whenever you like. You shall name your own day, and you shall tell Mr. Venn after we are married. Only keep the secret till then."

"How long am I to wait?" asked the girl.

"A week, — ten days, not more. We must make our preparations. I must get you all sorts of things, darling. I love you too well to let you go in a fit of passion. If I have been ill-tempered at times, it is because I am sometimes troubled with many things of which you know nothing. Make a little allowance for me. You, at least, shall never be troubled, Laura, my pet. My happiness is in your hands. Give it back to me; and, in return, all my life shall be spent in trying to please you."

"You frighten me," she said. "You are so passionate. Why do you hold my hand so hard? Look here, Philip — I will do this. To-day is Wednesday. I will meet you and marry you next Wednesday, if you like. If you do not marry me then, you shall not marry me at all. And now, good-by till Wednesday morning."

She tripped away, without her heart beating a single pulsation faster; while he was left trembling in every limb.

"Wednesday!" He began to reflect how people were married. "Wednesday. A week. And there is every thing to be got ready."

He went to the city, to his agent's, and drew five hundred pounds.

"It is my duty, Mr. Durnford," said the agent, "to remind you that you have only a thousand pounds left. Although it is invested at ten per cent, a hundred a year is not a large income."

"You are quite right," said Philip. "It is not, indeed, — too small to be considered, almost. But I must have the five hundred."

He lodged it at Cox's; and then went to a milliner's shop, and ordered a complete trousseau, to be ready packed in a few days. They wanted to try things on;

but he picked out a young lady in the shop of about Laura's dimensions, and told them to try the things on her.

After that, he began to investigate the great marriage question, being as yet little conversant with legal procedure of any kind. He knew that you might go to church, or that you might go to a registrar's office; so he found out the office of a registrar, and asked what he had to do.

It appeared to be very simple. You must reside for a space of three weeks in a parish, — that had already been done; but, which made it impossible, he must have the names posted up in the office for a fortnight. And so he went and bought a special license.

He went home radiant with hope and happiness, and spent a quiet evening alone communing with the future.

The next day he went to see how the trousseau was getting on, and bought a wedding-ring. Then he ordered several new suits of clothes to be made at once, and a large stock of linen, with an undefined feeling that married life meant every thing new.

That was Thursday's work.

Then came Friday, and, with Friday, a visit from Mr. MacIntyre.

"You will not spend many more evenings with me," said Phil; "so sit down, and make yourself comfortable."

"And wherefore not?" asked his tutor.

"Because I'm going to be married next Wednesday."

"Gude guide us!" The good man turned quite pale. "Next Wednesday? Is all settled? It is Laura, of course—I mean Miss Collingwood."

"Of course it is Laura."

"And how are you to be married?"

"By special license."

Mr. MacIntyre looked as if he would ask another question, but refrained; and presently went his way.

On Tuesday evening, Mr. MacIntyre looked up quietly, and asked, —

"What church are you going to be married in?"

Phil turned pale.

"Idiot that I am! I never thought about the church at all."

CHAPTER XVI.

"UNDER ordinary circumstances, Lollie," said Venn, on Tuesday morning, when the child came round, — "under ordinary circumstances, the middle-aged man awakes in the morning with the weary feeling of a day's work before him." He always spoke

as if he was oppressed with the duties of labor. "By some unlucky accident, I feel this morning as if the innocent mirth of childhood was back again. I fear nothing. I hope every thing. Two courses are therefore open to us."

"What two courses?" asked the girl, always watchful of Venn's words, and never quite able to follow the conclusions to which they led him.

"I ought, I suppose, to take advantage of this unusual flow of spirits, and write something with the real glow of joy upon it. My works are, perhaps, too uniformly meditative. I dare say you have remarked it."

"I think they are beautiful, all of them," replied the flatterer.

"Ah, Lollie, I ought to be a happy man. I have an audience — limited at present, to be sure — which appreciates me. Mohammed had his Cadijah. But there is another course open to us. See the sun upon the leaves of the two trees in the court. Listen to the sparrows chirping with renewed vigor. They know that the hilarious worm will be tempted forth to enjoy the sun. The purring of the basking cat is almost audible if you open the window. The paper-boy whistles across the square. The policemen move on with a lighter step. The postman bounds as he walks. The laundresses put off their shawls. Lollie, what do these things mean?"

"They mean going into the country, do they not?" she replied, catching his meaning.

"They do, child. They mean Epping Forest. We will take the train to Loughton, and walk to Epping. They mean a little dinner at the Cock, and a pint of Moselle. They mean strolling through the wood to Theydon Bois, and coming home in the evening with roses in our cheeks."

Another time, Lollie would have jumped for joy. Now she only looked up, and smiled.

"What is the matter, my little girl?" asked Hartley, taking her face in his hands. "For a fortnight past you have not been in your usual spirits. To-day you are pale and worn. Are you ill, Lollie?"

"No," she cried, bursting into tears, "I am not ill; only — only — you are so good to me."

His own eyes filled as he stooped and kissed her forehead.

"You are nervous this morning, little one: you must go to Epping, that is clear."

"It is not only that: it is something else."

"What else, Lollie? You can tell me."

"It is my secret, Mr. Venn."

"Well, then, Lollie, if that is all, I can wait for this precious secret. So be happy again."

"It is a secret that concerns you. I think it will make you happier—you said once that it would. Oh! I wish I might tell you—I wish you would let me."

"Little Impatience! And what sort of a secret would that be which I know already? Do you remember the man who whispered his to the winds? Never tell a secret, child; because the birds of the air may carry it about."

"I have been so unhappy about it," the girl went on, through her tears. "I can't sleep for thinking of it. Oh, you will be pleased I know you will! But I wish I could tell you. I will—I don't care who is offended. Mr. Venn, I am going"—

"Stop, Lollie," he replied, putting his finger to her lips—"Don't tell me. See, I give you perfect control over your secret, till to-morrow. I refuse to listen—I am deaf. If you try to tell me I shall begin to sing, and then the nearest cows will fall ill, and the calves will lie down and expire."

She sighed, and was silent. Alas! if only she had spoken. Fate was against her.

They went to Loughton, and took that walk through the forest which only the East-end cockneys love. In the long glades which stretch right and left the hawthorn was in full blossom; the tender green of the new leaves, freshly colored, and all of different hues, the soft breath of the young summer, the silence and repose, fell on the girl's spirit, and soothed her. For the moment she forgot the secret, and almost felt happy. And yet it lay at her heart. Her life—she knew so much—was going to be changed; how much she could not tell. The life of two would be, she thought, a life of three. It was what Mr. Venn had wished for her; and yet—and yet—there was the shade of a danger upon her, a foreboding of calamity, which she tried in vain to throw off. Venn poured out his treasures of fancy,—those half-thought-out ideas and half-seen analogies which filled his brain, and evaded him when he tried to put them on paper. But they fell, for once, on unfruitful ground. She caught some of them or only half caught them; and then talk grew languid.

"My spirits of this morning seem to have failed me," he cried impatiently:—

'Not seldom, clad in radiant hue,
Deceitfully goes forth the morn.'

A spiritual shower has fallen, and we have no umbrella. What is it, child?" he asked

impatiently. "Why are we so silent and sad to-day? Let us be happy. Are we drenched with the shower?"

Lollie half laughed, and they walked on.

Presently they came upon a woman, toiling along with a baby in her arms, and two children toddling after them. As they came up to her, the woman turned, and struck one of them sharply, for lagging.

"Don't do that, my good creature," said Venn. "Perhaps the little one is tired."

"He's tired and hungry too, sir," she replied; "but I've got to get him to Epping, for all that, and walk he must."

"Poor little man!" said Venn. "Say, are you very tired?"

The child was evidently worn out.

"We are going the same way," he said.

"I will carry him for you."

"You, sir?—and a gentleman, and all!"

"Why not? Come, my boy."

He lifted the little one in his arms.

"Lollie, I am not going to let you carry the other. He is big enough to walk."

"Ah, yes, miss,—don't ee now," said the woman. "He's strong enough—ain't you, Jackey?"

Then they all walked away together,—Venn talking to the woman, and she telling her little story; how her husband had got work at Epping, and she was walking all the way from town with her babies.

"I had a comfortable place, sir," she said, "six years ago; and little I thought then of the hardships I should have to undergo. God knows we've been half starving sometimes."

"And are you sorry you married?" asked Lollie.

"Nay, miss, a woman is never sorry she married," replied the poor wife. "My man is a real good sort, unless now and then when it's the drink tempts him. And then I've the children, you see. Ah! well, sir,—God gives us the good and the bad together. But never you think, miss, that a woman is sorry she married."

"Truly," said Venn, "marriage is a continual sacrament."

"Are you married yourself, sir?"

"I am not," he replied gravely. "So far I am only half a man; and now I shall never marry, I fear."

Lollie looked up in his face, over which lay that light cloud of melancholy which alternated in Venn with the sweet smile of his mobile lips. She walked on, pondering. "No woman ever sorry for being married." There was comfort!

"You are happy when you are with your husband?" she asked presently.

The woman turned sharply upon her.

"Of course I am happy with my Ben," she said. "Happiness with us is not made

of the same sort of stuff as with you rich folks."

"I am not a rich folk," said the girl, smiling.

"Well, well, — never mind my sharpness, miss. You're one of the kind folks, and that's all I care about."

She trudged on, talking to herself, as such women do, between her lips. Venn was behind them now, talking to the boy in his arms; and so they reached Epping. At the outskirts of the long town, where the cottages begin, the woman insisted on the boy being put down, and began to thank them. Venn gave her a little present of a few shillings, and left her trudging along with the children.

"There goes our Moselle, Lollie," he said with a sigh. "Always some fresh disappointment. I had set my heart on that Moselle for you."

"Mr. Venn! As if I should be so selfish."

"All the same," he grumbled. "It was a stroke of my usual bad luck, meeting that woman."

The bottle of Moselle made its appearance in spite of her; but even the sparkle of the wine failed to raise Lollie's spirits to their usual level. The girl was profoundly dejected. Venn tried the wildest talk, told her the wildest stories; but in vain. It grew close to the hour of the last train, — the Great Eastern, with its usual liberality, having fixed the last train at eight, so as to prevent everybody from enjoying the evening in the Forest. They walked together to the station, — silent, dejected, and unhappy.

"I wish — oh, I wish to-morrow was over!" the girl sighed, when they were alone in the railway carriage.

"Does that secret worry you, Lollie? Is that the wretched cause of your depression? Forget it, — put it out of your mind."

"Let me tell it you."

"Nonsense, child," he laughed: "as if I wanted to know. Think of Midas, as I told you this morning. You shall not tell me now."

"Tell me once more," she said, "what you would like me most of all to do."

He hesitated. Had he followed the promptings of his own heart, he would have said, —

"To marry me, Lollie: to go away with me from London; to live together, never to get tired, in some country place, — the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

If he had but said so! — for it was not yet too late, and the girl was yearning to tell him all.

"I think, child," he said slowly, after a pause, "there is but one thing I really want you to do. I should like, before all else, to

see you married happily. Sukey settled that for us, you know. I haven't seen Sukey now for two months. Let us go there to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow," said Lollie. "Do you really mean, — really and truly mean what you say? You would like to see me married?"

Heavens, how blind the man is! He does not see that the girl's whole heart is his; that after all those years her nature is responsive to his own; that she has but one thought, one affection, one passion, — though she knows it not, — the love of Hartley Venn.

"Mean it?" he says, with his tender smile. "Of course I mean it. Recollect what the woman said to-day. You have seen how love may survive poverty, hunger, misery, and rise triumphant over all. Think what love may be when there is no misery to beat it down."

"Love — yes, love. They are always talking about love. I mean marriage."

"They go together, Lollie."

"Does," — she checked the name that rose to her lips — "do people, when they talk of marriage, always mean love?"

"They are supposed to do so, Lollie. On the other hand, when they talk of love, they do not always — Ah, here is Fenchurch Street."

No more was said that night. The girl went up to his room, and made him tea; and at half-past nine, she put on her hat.

"To-morrow, Mr. Venn — ah! to-morrow — I shall tell you my secret."

"Sleep soundly, little bird, and forget your secret. What time am I to know it?"

"I don't quite know. I should think, in the afternoon."

"Very well, then; I shall stay in from one till four, and if you do not come then I shall suppose the secret is not ready. Will that do? Good-night, Lollie dear."

He stooped to kiss her forehead; but she took his face in her hands, and kissed his lips almost passionately.

"Always believe," she said, "even if you are not pleased, that I love you, and am so grateful to you that nothing can tell it. Always believe I love you, and hope to please you."

And so slipped away, and was gone.

Did Hartley have no suspicion? — None — none — none. He was not, you see, a man "about town." He did not think or suspect evil. Least of all could he suspect evil in the case of his little girl. And that she should take his words so literally as to marry a man in order to please him would have struck him as beyond all belief.

And yet it was exactly what she was going to do.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is the morning of Lollie's wedding-day. As the girl dresses in her little room, she is crying silently; for a great fear has fallen upon her,—the fear that what she is going to do will not meet with that approval and praise which she at first anticipated. It had been growing in her brain; and when, only yesterday, she first gave it expression, it assumed a clear and definite form. She dressed quickly, trying to soothe her own excitement, drank a cup of tea, and slipped out at ten o'clock to meet her lover. No thought, you will remark, of her grandmother. On the whole, I hardly see how any could be expected. The girl did not belong to the old woman. She owed nothing to her, she had not a thought in common with her, she hardly ever spoke to her; and, save that they slept under one roof, they had nothing to do with each other. Certainly, the idea that the old woman might be made unhappy by conduct of hers never occurred to her. It was a lovely morning in June, one of those days when London puts on its brightest aspect, and looks — as it always would, were Heaven pleased to improve our climate — the "empress of cities. Through the crowded streets, down Oxford Street and Regent Street, without stopping to look at the gratuitous exhibitions in the shop-windows, Lollie tripped along, with heightened color and quick-beating pulse.

Going to be married, — going to marry a gentleman! What would be Mr Venn's surprise and delight when she went to him in the evening!

For once, Philip was first at their trysting-place in the park.

Going to be married, going to plight her troth, — for better for worse too. A girl, who, in the absolute innocence of her heart, gives herself to him for no love that she bears him, but only to please, as she thinks, another man. Going to be a bridegroom? He does not look it, as he paces up and down the gravel, driving down his heels, with a pale face and a troubled look. Surely a bridegroom should look in better spirits; and when he sees the girl approaching, his own betrothed, soon to be his bride, why do his knees tremble beneath him, so that he must fain sit down on a bench?

Then she holds out her hand, and he takes it undauntedly.

"Remember what I said, Philip," she began directly. "Unless you marry me to-day I shall not marry you at all; and I shall tell Mr. Venn every thing."

"Is that the only love-vow you have to give me?" asked the bridegroom.

"O Philip! do not talk like that. Always of love, and love-vows! I tell you again, I do not understand it. What should I say, if not the truth?"

Philip sighed. There was yet time to save himself. The girl did not love him; but, then, he loved the girl. He had that passionate longing for this sweet, fair-haired maiden, — so bright, so clever, so *new*, — which, I think, can never come to a man more than once in his life. God has made us so that not more than one woman can be an angel to us. Her excepted, — we know the sex. We grovel to her; we stand upright before the rest, conscious of the head and a half difference between the man and the woman. Lollie was Philip's angel. And — alas! the pity of it — there are so many men who cannot hold their one woman an angel for longer than the honeymoon; and must needs cry shame and folly to themselves for the sweet infatuation which alone makes life tolerable to us.

"Come, Laura," said Philip, "I have the license in my pocket, — a special license. See here." He pulled out the document. "The Archbishop of Canterbury has given his consent, you see; so that is all right. I thought you would best like a private marriage."

"Oh, yes!" cried Lollie, — "much best."

"And as we shall have no wedding-breakfast, no carriage, and nothing but our own two selves, I have arranged with a very excellent clergyman — a Scotch clergyman — to perform the ceremony for us which will make you my wife. Will that do for you?"

He had fallen, then, into the pit dugged for him.

"Surely, Philip," she said, "it shall all be as you think best for us; and then I shall tell Mr. Venn."

He had been out of the park into the Strand, and took a Hansom cab to Keppel Street.

Mr. MacIntyre was himself standing at the window in the ground-floor front, and came to open the door. Then he led them in, and shut the door carefully. That done, he stared hard at the bride.

"Come into the other room a moment," said Philip in a hoarse voice. "I want to say a word."

The other room was Mr. MacIntyre's bedroom, opening from the first by folding-doors. Lollie, left alone, looked out of the window and waited. As she looked, a funeral procession came from an opposite house, and the dismal *cortège* passed down the street. Then, too, the sky was clouded over, and big drops of rain were falling. Her heart sank within her. Truly, an

omen of the worst. She turned from the window, and looked round the room. A curious fragrance, unknown to her, was lingering about the corners. It was due to toddy. A small fire was burning in the grate, though the morning was warm; and a kettle was singing on the hob. Two or three pipes lay on the mantle-shelf; and a few books, chiefly of the Latin grammar class, bought when Mr. MacIntyre meditated taking pupils, stood upon the shelves. The furniture was hard and uncomfortable. And her spirits fell lower and lower.

In the other room she heard voices. If she had heard what was said, she might even then have escaped; but she only heard the murmur.

Philip, when the door was shut, turned upon his companion, with lips and cheeks perfectly white, and, seizing Mr. MacIntyre by the shoulders, shook the little man backwards and forwards as if he had been a reed.

"Villain!" he groaned. — "black-hearted, calculating scoundrel."

"When you've done shaking your best friend," returned his tutor, "and calling bad names, perhaps you will listen for a few moments to the voice of reason."

"Go on, then."

Philip sat down on the edge of the bed.

"I can't do it, MacIntyre, I can't do it," he murmured. "It is the blackest villany. Poor Laura! poor darling! Oh what scoundrels we are! And I, who was once an honorable man!"

"Hoots, toots," said the philosopher.

But Philip was lying with his face in his hands, shaking with emotion.

MacIntyre contemplated his old pupil for a few moments with a puzzled expression; then — for he felt unequal to the ordeal without support — he went to the cupboard, and very silently poured out just half a glass of raw spirit, which he swallowed hastily. Then he addressed himself to business, and tried, but with small effect, to assume a sympathetic air.

"Ma puir laddie," he said "You surely never thought that I, Alexander MacIntyre, the releeigious guide of your infancy, was going to counsel you to take a dishonorable step. Phil, ye'll be as legally tied up as if the archbishop did it. Believe me, a regularly ordained minister of the established kirk o' Scotland. If a prince was going to be married, this would be the right shop to come to. And you, with a license, special and most expensive, and all."

Philip sat up again.

"Is it true, MacIntyre? Is it really true, what you say?"

"True, my Phil, every word true. Shall

I swear to it? Now brush your hair, and look bright, and let us go back to the lassie. Hech! man — there's a thunder-clap. Come along, or she will be frightened."

He pushed him back, and, sitting down at the table, laid open a Bible, borrowed for the occasion from the unsuspecting landlady.

"Sit down, both of you," he began imperiously.

They sat down opposite him.

"Have ye got a license, Mr. Durnford?" he asked. "Good. A special license, granting you permission to be married in any parish? Good. At any time? Good. In any place of worship? Vera good. And by any clergyman? Vera good indeed. Young leddy, your name, if you please. You may write it here."

He had prepared two slips of paper to imitate a marriage certificate. And Philip noticed now, for the first time, that he was "dressed" for the character, in complete black, with a white neckcloth that would not have disgraced a banjo man, and which, with his red nose, gave him quite the appearance of a superior mute. And, the signatures obtained, when he turned over the leaves of the Bible a cheerful piety became diffused over his face, quite new to his friends, and very remarkable to witness. Lollie looked at the clergyman who was marrying her with an instinctive feeling of aversion. The ill-fitting black clothes, the voluminous necktie, the red nose and pale cheeks, the shaking hand, all told her, as plain as words could speak, that the man was one of the great Stiggins's tribe of whom Hartley Venn had told her. Nevertheless, she was in Philip's hands; and, like the birds on the solitary's island, she had not yet learned to distrust mankind, because she only knew one man.

It does not befit this page to describe with greater detail the mockery of marriage which Mr. MacIntyre solemnly went through. Suffice it to say, that, after reading a chapter of the Bible, he prayed. And, after his prayer, making the two stand up, he joined their hands, pronounced them man and wife, and concluded by an exhortation mainly made up of what he still recollected of the Shorter Catechism. What it wanted in unction it gained in doctrine; and, though there was little in the discourse calculated to assist the bride in her duties of married life, there was plenty which might have been used as a rod and staff by the Calvinistic Christian. Lollie stood frightened and bewildered; for all through the "service," the thunder had been rolling and crashing, and the lightning seemed to play over the very house where this great

wickedness was being committed. Even Mr. MacIntyre was moved by it. It was one of those great thunderstorms which sometimes break over London, striking terror to all hearts, such as those which fell upon us last year—I mean the year of grace 1872,—a fierce, roaring, angry, thunderstorm. And as the lightning flashed across his eyes, and the thunder pealed in his ears, the minister fairly stopped in his discourse, and murmuring, “Hech! sirs, this is awfu’!” waited for the anger of the elements to subside.

But he ended at last, and, congratulating the bride, offered Philip one of the slips of paper, keeping the other for himself. Then he rubbed his hands and laughed,—a joyless cackle. And then he produced a black bottle and a small cake, and poured out three glasses of wine. He drank off his own at a gulp, refilled it, and sat down rubbing his hands again.

This was Lollie’s wedding-breakfast.

Outside, the hail pattered against the windows, the thunder rolled, and the warm spring air seemed chilled again to winter.

Philip said nothing. A look was in his face such as neither MacIntyre nor Lollie had ever seen before,—a sort of wild, terrified look; such a look as might be imagined in the face of a man who, after long planning, has at last committed a great and terrible crime; such a look as one would have if he heard the voice of God accusing him,—the voice Philip heard in the storm. Men are so. That unlucky Jew whom the thunder-storm rebuked for eating pork was not the first, nor will he be the last, to connect natural phenomena with his own misdoings. In the storm outside, Philip, with the superstition of a Creole, heard the anger of Heaven. It only echoed the remorse in his own heart. A second time he seized MacIntyre by the arm, and led him to the bedroom.

“Once again,” he said, “I *must* speak to you. Tell me whether it is true—is it true—are we married? Speak the truth, or I will kill you!”

“You are married, Phil,” returned the other. “No question can ever arise on the legality of the marriage until—until”—

“Until when?”

“Until you come into your property. And now, listen. There is, *perhaps*,—I only say perhaps,—a little irregularity. If you want to remove that, remember to take your wife into Scotland, whenever you please, and live with her as your wife openly. Then you need fear nothing. I say this to make you quite certain; but I do not believe there can be any legal doubt.”

Philip looked at him with a surprised

air. Then, with great relief, he walked into the other room, where Lollie was standing, waiting and puzzled.

“Laura, my darling,” he cried, kissing her passionately. “My wife, my bride! we are married at last. If ever I desert you, may God desert me!”

She drew herself from his arms, not blushing, not coy, not ashamed; but only cold.

“We are ready married?” she cried, clapping her hands. “I wasn’t certain. And now we will go straight to Mr. Venn, and tell him.”

The two men looked at each other.

“My child,” said Philip, changing color, “we must be married like everybody else, must we not?”

“But we are, Philip, are we not?”

“Yes, dear; but married people always go away for a journey together. You and I are going to France for a month. When we come back, we shall call at Mr. Venn’s chambers,”

She stamped her foot.

“I shall go to-day. You said I was to tell him to-day. I *will* tell him. Philip, if you do not go with me, I will go by myself.”

“Make her write,” whispered the man of experience.

“You certainly cannot go, Laura,” said her husband. “That is impossible; but I tell you what you shall do. You shall write him a letter, telling him all. Mr. MacIntyre shall take it, and tell him the particulars. We have but a quarter of an hour to spare, for our train starts at once. Now, dear”—taking pen and paper—“sit down and write. It is best so—it is indeed.”

She burst into tears. She declared that she had been deceived. She insisted on going at once to Gray’s Inn. If Philip had not held her, she would have gone.

Mr. MacIntyre said nothing; only, when he caught Philip’s eye, he pointed to the pens and paper. Meantime, it was a critical moment; and his nose, which he constantly rubbed, seemed bigger and redder than ever.

“Laura, you must not go to Mr. Venn to-day. It is absurd,” pleaded Philip. “Sit down now. Write: no one shall read what you say. And it shall be sent at once; but you cannot go to Gray’s Inn.”

Lollie sat down, and tried to write; but she burst into fresh tears, and was fain to bury her face in her hands.

“Women are so,” whispered the Scotchman. “Obsairve. In ten minutes she will be laughing again.”

In less than ten minutes she recovered, and tried to write. Philip waited patiently, watching her.

She began three or four sheets of note-paper, and tore them up. At last she wrote hurriedly, —

"DEAREST MR. VENN, — My secret may now be told. I have done what you wished me so much to do. I have married a gentleman. I have married Mr. Philip Durnford; and I am always, and ever and ever, your own most grateful and most loving little girl —

LOLLIE."

She folded it up, addressed it, and gave it to her husband.

"MacIntyre," said Philip, "take the note round, will you, this very day? Tell Mr. Venn that my wife and I are gone to France — probably to Normandy — for a month; that we shall call upon him directly we return; that my greatest wish is to gain his friendship. Will that do for you, Laura?"

"Philip," she said, taking his hand, — "now you are really kind."

"That is my own Laura; but now we must make haste. I have got your boxes at the station."

"My boxes?"

"Yes. You did not think you were going to France with nothing but what you have on, did you?"

"I never thought about going to France at all."

"The tickets are taken. There will be nothing to do but to make ourselves happy. Now, MacIntyre, get me a cab, will you?"

It seemed strange that so reverend a gentleman should be ordered in this peremptory way to fetch a cab; but Lollie was too much surprised with every thing to feel perplexed at this. The cab came.

"Now, my darling! MacIntyre, goodbye. Jump in, Laura."

"Don't forget my letter, Mr. MacIntyre," cried the girl. "Mind you take it to-day."

And so they drove off.

Mr. MacIntyre returned to his room.

"About this letter, now," he said. "Let me read it."

By the help of the kettle he steamed the envelope, opened, and read the poor little epistle.

He put it down and meditated.

"Suppose I take it round," he said. "Why should I? Poor bonny little lassie! Loves him more than her husband — that is clear. If I take it, difficulties, dangers, all sorts of things, may happen. If I do not take it, this Mr. Venn will never forgive the girl. Well, which is it, — my happiness, or hers? A man, or a woman? Myself, or another?"

He meditated a long time. Cruelly selfish and wicked as the man was, he had been touched by the girl's beauty and innocence, and would willingly have spared himself this additional wickedness; but then there rose up before him the vision of a court of justice. He saw himself tried by a jury for mock marriage. He knew that the law had been broken. What he did not know was, how far the offence was criminal, or if it was criminal at all. Then a cold perspiration broke out upon him.

"Let us hide it," he said, — "let us hide it. Perhaps we can devise some means of preventing this man Venn from knowing it — at all events, just yet."

And so saying, he pushed the letter into the fireplace, and watched it burning into ashes.

"And as for Master Phil," he murmured, "why, I'll give him just two months to cure him of this fancy, and bring him to the end of his money. Then, we shall see — we shall see. The great card has to be played."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I AM ill at ease to-night," said Hartley, on the Wednesday evening when Jones and Lynn found him at the "Rainbow." "I am low-spirited. Forebodings, like the screech-owl's mew, oppress me. Laura was to have told me some grand piece of news to-day, and has not come. Then there was the thunder. I am afraid of thunder. Engineers ought to turn their attention to it. Bring me some bitter beer, George — unless the thunder has turned it sour."

"I like this place," he went on. "It is quiet. The mutton is good, the beer is good, and there is an ecclesiastical air about it. The head-waiter resembles an elderly verger without his gown. The manager might pass for a canon; and as for the carver, I have never known any one beneath the dignity of a prebendary grow bald in that singular manner."

"Life, Jones," he continued, in the course of his dinner, "may be compared to a banquet. You have, perhaps, often anticipated this comparison."

"Not I," said Jones — "not I, myself; but Longfellow has.

'Life is but an endless banquet,
Where we still expectant sit;
Be not thou a cold, wet blanket,
Damping all thy neighbor's wit.

Chops for one; and for another,
Turkey stuffed with truffles gay;
Only bread for me: My brother,
Turn the carver's eye this way.

Let us all be up and eating,
 With a heart for any slice;
 Beef grows cold, and life is fleeting;
 Pass the champagne and the ice."

Venn repeated his first words, and resumed the topic.

"When it comes to my turn to be served, the noble host, addressing me with a countenance full of benevolence and friendship, says, 'Hartley, my dear boy, take another disappointment.' It would be bad manners, you know, to refuse. Besides, I am not quite certain how a refusal would be received. So I bow and smile: 'Thank you, my Lord. One more, if you please. A very little one, with gravy.'"

"Gravy! Is gravy the alleviator?"

"Gravy, Jones, is the compensator. So I get helped again, and sigh when the plate comes back to me. In the distribution of good things, no one is consulted; but, by tacit agreement, we show our good breeding by pretending to have chosen. So, too, I believe, when convicts at Portland converse, it is considered manners to take no notice of each other's chains. I might prefer, perhaps, pudding and port, such as my neighbor gets; but I am resigned."

He sighed heavily, and went on eating his dinner with a tremendous appetite.

"Let us have," he said, when they had finished, "a Chorus night. Arthur Durnford is coming. Not a regular Chorus, but a Chorus of emergency. I hope it will not thunder any more."

"I have been making observations lately," he began, "on a class of women hitherto little studied. Speak up, Jones."

"Nay," said the dramatist, "I was but thinking of the old lines — I forget the author — about women, —

'Virtue and vice the same bait have:
 On either's hook the same enticements are.
 Woman lures both the base and brave,
 And beauty draws us with a single hair.'"

"There is method in his madness," said Venn. "It is to be regretted only that Virtue does not always choose the bait with the same discrimination as Vice. This, however, is a wide subject. I was about to call the attention of the Chorus to the woman who sniffs. About a week ago, having nothing to do, I got into a favorite omnibus for an hour or two of quiet thought. The rattle of the omnibus glasses, when the wind is westerly, I find conducive to meditation; and as the Favorite line runs from Victoria to the extreme verge of civilization at Highgate, there is ample time. Several women got in, and I noticed — perhaps it was partly due to the time of year — several sniffs as each sat down and

spread her petticoats. Your regular female omnibus passenger always takes up as much room as she can, and begins by staring defiantly round. I was at the far end, whither I had retired to avoid an accusation of assault; for they kick your shins across the narrow passage, and then give you in charge, these ladies. So delicate, my friends, is the virtue of the class to which I allude, that even the suspicion of an attack is resented with this celestial wrath. Presently, however, I being the only male, there came in a young person, quiet, modest, and retiring. She made her way to the far end, and sat down next to me. Instantly there was fired a volley — a hostile salute — from seven noses: a simultaneous sniff of profound meaning. Versed in this weapon of feminine warfare, and therefore understanding the nature of the attack, the newcomer blushed deeply, and dropped her veil. It was like the lowering of a flag. I took the earliest opportunity of tendering her respectfully the compliments of the season; and, in spite of a second and even a fiercer attack, we held our own, and conversed all the way to Highgate. Coming back by the same omnibus, I insensibly glided into a vision."

"Good," said Jones, "let us have the vision."

"Methought I stood on an eminence, and looked down, myself unseen, upon an island where men and women wandered about, of uncouth form and strange proportions. Some with venomous tongues, which lolled out in perpetual motion, yet saying nothing; some with trumpet-like noses; some with curiously deformed fingers; some with large and goggle eyes; and some with heads of enormous dimensions. This, my guide — I had an angel with me, of course — told me, was one of the lesser islands of Purgatory. It appears that Dante was quite wrong in his account of that place, which consists really of a group of contiguous islands, like the Bermudas. I dare say I shall see some more of them before I die. The one I was standing over was appropriated to sinners in small things, — backbiters, envious, malicious, mean, grasping, selfish (these last had enormous stomachs, like barrels of port wine), and attributors of unworthy and base motives (who were gifted with a corresponding prominence behind). I requested permission to inspect the company more closely, and was taken down into their very midst. I was astonished to find that a very large majority of them were women: their dress and behavior showed them to belong to our own middle class. They were all English; because, by reason of the great babble of conversation that goes on among this sort of criminals, it is

found advisable to separate the nationalities.

"Looking more closely, I observed that the men chiefly carried the protuberances, fore and aft, of which I have spoken; while the women, nearly one and all, had the trumpet-shaped nose. The peculiarity of its shape was that the mouth of the trumpet was outward. Its musical effect could therefore only be produced by drawing the air towards the head, much in the same way as by a sniff. This struck me as a very singular arrangement. I was also informed that most of them, on their first arrival, had but very small trumpet noses; but that these, by dint of practice, increased daily and gradually, until they arrived at the gigantic proportions which I saw around me. They began by being proud of this growth; but by degrees grew alarmed, and were seriously inconvenienced by its great size. They then began to reduce its dimensions, by allowing it to remain, so to speak, unexercised; and if, as sometimes happened, they arrived at a perception of its manifest ugliness, they discontinued its use altogether, when it totally vanished. Others had the great tongues of which I have spoken. They were too big to use for speech; but, as their owners were always wanting to communicate some fresh piece of malicious gossip, they were perpetually wagging and bobbing, though no articulate sound came forth. The possessors of the tongues were more melancholy of aspect than the trumpet-nosed sisters, because they were debarred from the use of their instruments altogether. The tongue followed the same laws as the nose, and there were even women provided with both tongue and nose. While I was contemplating these unhappy victims of vice, my attention was directed by my guide to a young lady of about twenty-five, whose nose had at its extremity the merest rudimentary mouth-piece, — so small as to be almost a beauty spot, — suggestive only of where a trumpet had formerly been. My guide accosted her, and requested her to give a history of herself. She smiled and complied.

"I was the daughter of a professional man, living in the neighborhood of Russell Square. We were not rich, but we were well off. I was sent to a boarding-school at Brighton, where the principal things we were taught were to dress well, to aspire to a wealthy husband, to despise people of lower rank, to aim at getting as much amusement out of life as possible, to consider the admiration of men as the glory of a woman's life, and to regard the labor of men as performed only with one aim, — to provide dress and a good establishment

for their wives. This was the kind of education in our fashionable boarding-school; and when my sister and I came back to Russell Square, we were fully provided with all the weapons for that warfare which constitutes the life of most women. I found, wherever I went, nearly all girls the same as ourselves. We were good, inasmuch as we all went to church regularly, and would have done nothing wrong. But we filled up our time with frivolity and gossiping. We were petty in our vices, and, therefore, you see, our punishment is petty.' She pointed to her nose, whereon the least tip of a kind of button marked the place where the mouth-piece had been only five minutes before. 'The evil we did was not very great, and so our punishment is light. Even this is generally removed, if we repent.'

"Do you repent?' I asked.

"Oh, yes!' she said; 'the lives of women, which might be so smooth, so happy, and full of love, are eaten into and poisoned by these habits of malice and envy. You men think us angels; and when you marry us, and find out that we are full of faults, you begin to deery the whole sex. When will some one teach us that largeness of heart and nobleness that so many men have?'"

"A most sensible young woman," Jones interrupted.

"At this moment the button at the end of her nose entirely disappeared, and she vanished.

"Where is she gone?' I asked my guide.

"There was that in his face which betokened temper. I fancy he must have been paid a percentage on the inhabitants of his island, or taken them on board by contract, according to number; for he refused to answer me, and was on the point of ordering me to move on, when I awoke."

"The young woman, you say, is in the Bermudas," said Jones. "I would she were in the arms of one who would rightly appreciate her.

'Where the remote Bermudas ride,
A trumpet-nosed maid I espied;
And, as I looked her through and through,
Her imperfections thus she blew, —
"In Purgatory still I sniff,
And I will gladly furnish, if
You wish it, such a dismal tale,
As well may frighten maidens all."

I leave out a good many lines, which I have forgotten, —

'So sang she with the trumpet nose;
My own with sorrow at her woes,
I loudly blew; and as she spoke,
The neighboring sniffs the echoes woke.'

I believe the lines were originally Andrew Marvell's."

It was Jones's hard fate in the Chorus, that whatever he quoted nobody seemed to take any notice. Venn's face betrayed no signs of having heard what he said; while Lynn, as usual, smoked in his chair, saying nothing at all. For Lynn was one of those men who seldom speak at all; and when they do, speak with more earnestness and energy than is generally heard.

Arthur, however, laughed; and the spectacles of Jones beamed gratefully on him.

"My Cousin Philip," said Arthur, "started an infamous theory some little time ago, that women prefer warmth to any thing else in the world."

"Well," said Venn, "there may be something to be said for it. I believe that he is partly right. Women live in the house. Their ideas of life are those of the domestic circle. To have every thing pleasant, comfortable, and elegant round them is quite a natural thing to desire. It is perhaps a brutal way of putting it, to say that they like to be warm. In the Chorus, we prefer a more indirect way of approaching a subject."

"Poor Phil takes direct views," said Arthur.

"Bring him here, and we will cure him," said Jones. "On the subject of women, there is nothing so elevated as the views of the Chorus,—the Sophoclean Chorus. We are, if we are nothing else, Sophoclean in our views of love.

'Love, the unconquered, thou whose throne
Is on youth's fair and rounded cheek,
Whom neither strong nor brave nor weak
Can e'er escape,—thee, thee we own.

Thou by thy master magic's aid
Cheatest keen eyes that else see well;
And o'er the loudest-sniffing maid
Pourest the glamor of thy spell.

The nymph whose deepest, fondest prayer
Is for a sheltered nook and warm,
Glow with a thousand fancies rare,
Lit with thy pyrotechnic charm.'

"I suppose you will say that Sophocles wrote that?" growled Lynn.

"A free imitation only. It may, perhaps, in some points excel the original. I say nothing."

"They talk a great deal," said Lynn, breaking his usual silence, "of educating women, and making them less frivolous. Of course, the immediate result is to send them to the opposite extreme. Now, of all the odious women you can meet, give me the strong-minded."

"Do not give her to me," said Jones.

"But it's all nonsense. They have made a college for them, and have Cambridge men there to teach them. In other words, they are going to make them second-rate scholars and third-rate mathematicians. What on earth is the use of that?"

"Is it," asked Venn, "the function of the Chorus to discuss female education?"

"Why not?" returned Lynn. "By Jove! I've a good mind to have a vision too."

"Do," said Jones. "Two visions in the same evening are at least more than we could have expected."

Lynn smoked meditatively for a few moments.

"I dreamed a dream," he began. "I thought that I stood in the world of the future,—the future of a hundred years. Woman was emancipated, as they said. Every woman did, like all men do now, what was right in her own eyes. They could preach, teach, heal, practise law, live alone, and be as free as any man can be now."

"Well?" asked Jones, for Lynn stopped.

"Well, I can't be as graphic as Venn was, because I have not the art of telling a story. I walked about the streets of London. I went into the houses, into the clubs, into the theatres,—everywhere. The first thing that struck me was the entire mixture of the sexes. Women were everywhere. They drove cabs, they were markers at billiard-tables, they kept shops, they plied trades, they were in the public offices—for every thing was open to public competition. I talked to some of them. I found they were very much changed from what I remembered them. Not only were they coarse in appearance and manners, but they seemed to have lost the delicacy of woman's nature. The bloom was off the youngest of them. Men, too, had lost all their old deference and respect. There were none of the courtesies of life left; for the women had long since revolted against being considered the weaker sex. A new proverb had arisen,—'The six-shooter makes all equal.' Every woman carried one ostentatiously; not, I fancied, so much for self-protection as for purposes of attack. Their talk seemed loud and coarse, their jokes were club-jokes, their stories were like those we hear on circuit and in mess-rooms. Their dress was altered too. The old robes were discarded; and short kilts, with a tight-fitting jacket, seemed to be all the fashion. I asked my guide,—did I say I had a guide?"

"You did not," said Jones. "Was he an angel?"

"Of course I had an angel. I asked him—or her—if they were all married women? Marriage, she told me, had been abolished by a large majority of women, as contrary to the true spirit of liberty. This was directly against the wish of the men, who, it seemed, desired to retain the cus-

tom. As, however, the ceremony is one which requires the consent of two, it was abolished. Then the men turned sulky, and formed a kind of union or guild for the protection of the marriage-laws. For a time it appeared as if the world would be depopulated: the statistics of the Registrar showed a falling-off in the number of births, which excited the gravest apprehensions. This league, however, fell to the ground from want of strength in the weaker brethren. After that, all went well. The laws of property were altered, and an old law, belonging to an obscure Indian tribe in the Neigherry Hills, was introduced. By virtue of this, property descended only through the mother. The interests of freedom were served, it is true; but it seemed to me as if there were some losses on the other hand, for all the men seemed dejected and lonely. There were no longer any high aims; no one looked for any thing more than worldly advantage; no one dreamed of an impossible future, as we do now; there were no enthusiasts, no reformers, no religious thinkers, no great men. All was a dead level. I asked my guide if there were any exceptions, if what I saw really represented the actual world. She confessed it did; but she boasted, with pride, that the world was now reduced to a uniform mediocrity. No one looked for any thing better, therefore no one tried for any thing better; no one praised any thing good, therefore no one tried to do any thing good; there were no prizes for excellence, therefore no one was excellent. But it all seemed dreary, stupid, and immoral as a modern music hall; and I awoke, glad to find that it was, after all, only a dream. I forgot to tell you that there were no homes, — there were no families. Children were sent out to be nursed, and the necessity of labor on the part of the women necessitated the abolition of the maternal instinct."

"Is that all?" said Jones.

"It is," said Lynn; "and, before you make a rhyme about it, — I can see you are meditating one, — I just wish to state my moral. Women are only what their circle of men make them. If they are frivolous, it is because the men are frivolous; if they are vain, it is because the men teach them vanity. But men have always to fall back upon their one great quality, — their purity. Deference to a quality which they so seldom possess seems to me the truest safeguard for women, and the thing most likely to be a restraint upon men. Education, emancipation, suffrage, — it is all infernal humbug. We confuse words. We call that education which is only instruction; we call emancipation what is a departure from the natural

order; we take woman from her own sphere, and put her into ours, and then deplore the old subjection of the sex. Good God! sir, — man is the nobler as well as the stronger. His function is to work, — to do; to drag the world along, to fight against and keep down the great surging sea of sin and misery that grows with our civilization and keeps pace with our progress. But woman's function is to stand by and help; to train the children, to comfort the defeated, and succor the wounded. Why, in the name of all the — all the saints, should she want to leave her own work and take ours?"

CHAPTER XIX.

On that Wednesday night, when Hartley Venn went to bed, it was late, even for him; and when, at six in the morning, a fierce knocking came to his bedroom-door, it was some fifteen minutes or so before he could quite make up his mind that he was not dreaming. At last, however, he roused himself sufficiently to be certain that somebody was actually knocking. Mrs. Peck was, in fact, the disturber of his rest. She was beating on the panel with a hammer, in despair of being able to awaken him in any other way. He half opened the door cautiously, and peered through to discover the cause of this phenomenon.

"Mrs. Peck," he said, "we have known each other now for a great many years, and I never before remember you doing so ridiculous a thing as to call me at six, the very hour when civilized life is on the point of recovering its strength. Pray, Mrs. Peck, do you take me for the early worm?"

The old woman pushed the door open, and came into his bedroom, looking curiously round. She was not, taking her at the best, a pleasant specimen of womanhood to look upon; but this morning she looked even less attractive than usual. For her false front was slipping off sideways; her black stuff dress was covered with mud; her wrinkled old face was begrimed with dirt, and puckered up with trouble; and Venn, rubbing his eyes, gradually awoke to the consciousness that she was staring at him with frightened eyes, and that something had happened.

Realizing this, he stepped back and got into bed, disposing the pillows so that he could give audience with an air of preparedness. Nothing, he used to say, speaking after the manner of Charles the Second's period, makes a man look more ridiculous in the eyes of his mistress than

an appearance of haste; and, whatever happens, it may as well be received with dignity, which only costs a little time for reflection. Now, there was no possibility, short of genius for dignity, of preserving a dignified appearance while shivering on a mat with but one garment on, and that of the thinnest and lightest kind. Therefore he retreated to the bed, and, propped up by the pillows, prepared to receive Mrs. Peck with self-respect. Not one thought of danger to himself: not one gleam of suspicion about the girl.

The old woman came in, confused and trembling. She looked about in a dazed sort of way, and then sank into a chair, crying, —

“O Mr. Venn! what have you done with her? What have you done with her?”

All Venn’s dignity vanished. He fell half back on the pillow for a moment, and then started up, and caught the old woman by the arm.

“Done with her? Done with her? Done with her? Speak, Mrs. Peck. Tell me what you mean.”

“You know, sir,” she said. “You know who I mean. What have you done with her, I say? What have you done with the girl as you petted and made so much of, till she wasn’t fit company for her grandmother? Oh, I ain’t afraid to speak! Where is she, I say? Where have you gone and hid her away? But I’ll find her, — if I search all London through, I’ll find her. Oh, my fine grand-daughter, that was why he wanted you up here every day, and nothing too good for you; and lessons every day, and grand clothes. And what am I to say now to the people that cried out how good she was? And where, oh! where is my ’lowance for her?”

Venn stared at her, speechless.

“Give her back to me, Mr. Venn. Nobody knows nothing. It shall all be as it used to be. Only let her come back, and we can make up a story and stop their mouths. Nobody knows.”

“Woman!” cried the man, not knowing what he said, “woman! you are mad, — where is Lollie?”

“And you, too, that I thought the best of men. You made her a little lady, so that all the people envied her. And one pound ten a week gone! You made her so good that not a creature could find a word to say against her. But you are all wicked alike. And now it’s you. And after all these years. And I’m to lose my ’lowance, and go into the workus.”

Her voice changed into a sort of wail, for her feelings were divided between the

loss of her grand-daughter and the probable loss of her allowance.

“Give her back to me, Mr. Venn. It isn’t only the loss of the one pound ten a week, paid regular, though the Lord knows it’s the parish I must come on. Give her back to me, and I’ll go on my bended knees to you. Say she’s good, and I’ll pray for you all the days of my life; and go to St. Alban’s, though I can’t abide their ways, a purpose. Oh, give her back to me! Tell me where you’ve put her.”

She sat down exhausted, in the chair by the bedside.

“It isn’t the ’lowance I mind so much; nor it isn’t the girl, because we never had much to say to each other, her and me; but it is the people. And they will talk. And one pound ten a week’s an awful sum to lose. And see, Mr. Venn, — I know that gentlemen will be gentlemen; and though the pore men curse, the pretty ones always goes to the gentlemen. That’s right, I suppose! though why it’s right, God only knows. But give her back to me; for I am an old woman, and respected, by reason of my grand-daughter. Give her back to me, Mr. Venn. I mind an old story about a man and a ewe lamb, and let me look the folk in the face again, for the love of God!”

He was standing before her in his night shirt all the time, not knowing what to say, feeling dizzy and confused.

Now he took her by the arm, and led her to the door.

“One moment, Mrs. Peck. Sit down and wait while I dress. I shall not be long. Don’t say another word till I come.”

He dressed with feverish haste, though his fingers were trembling, and he could not find the buttons. Then, after ten minutes or so, he came into the sitting-room, and, pouring out a glass of spirits, made the poor old creature drink it down.

“Now, Mrs. Peck, let us try and get all our courage. I have not seen her — believe me, my poor woman — since Tuesday evening.”

“She came home on Tuesday evening at ten o’clock.”

“Yes; she was to have come and told me something yesterday.”

“She went out at half-past nine yesterday morning, and she never came back. I waited for her till ten last night; and, thinking she was with you, I went sound asleep, and didn’t wake till this morning at six. And then I looked in her room, for the door was open, and she wasn’t there. And the workus is all I’ve got to look to.”

Venn’s hands were trembling now, and his face white.

“She cried when she left me on Tuesday.

She had her secret then. Mrs. Peck, remember, my little girl is good. She has done no harm, — she *can* do nothing wrong. Fool that I was when she wanted to tell me her secret, and I would not hear it. Where is she? But she is a good girl. Only wait — wait — wait — we shall see."

He spoke hopefully, but his heart fell. Nothing wrong? Whence, then, those tears? Why had she been so sad for two or three weeks? Why had she harped upon her secret? And yet, what could she do? Always with him, — whose acquaintance could she make?

"You're telling me gospel truth, sir?" cried his laundress. "Swear it — swear it on the Bible."

"I don't know where my Bible is, — the Lord forgive me!" he answered. "Do not let us be miserable," he went on, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "I expect she is stopping out with some friends."

"She has no friends. Never a soul has she ever spoken to, for twelve years, but you and me, and Miss Venn."

"Perhaps she is up there. I will go and see."

He tried to cheer up the old woman; invented a thousand different ways in which the girl might have been obliged to pass the night away from home; and then, because his own heart was racked and tortured, he hurried off to his sister's.

Sukey he met on her way to early service, — that at half-past seven. It was one of the peculiarities of that young lady to find a considerable amount of enjoyment in these extra-parochial, so to speak, and extraordinary forms of religion.

"Hartley! — you, of all men in the world, at half-past seven!"

"Sukey, have you got Lollie with you?"

"Laura? I haven't seen her for six weeks, — not since she had tea with me. But, Hartley, what is the matter?"

He caught hold of the railing which ran round the garden of the square, and almost fell. For it was his one hope; and his head swam.

"God help us all!" he murmured, — "my little girl is lost."

What could she say?

"She left me on Tuesday evening. She told me that yesterday I should learn a secret which would please me more than any thing, — she even offered to tell it me. She was excited and nervous when she said good-night to me; and yesterday evening she never went home at all. Sukey, don't speak to me — don't say any thing, because I cannot bear it. Come and ask in a day or two. Sukey, you believe in prayer. Go into church, and pray as you never prayed before. Throw all your heart into your

prayers for the child. Pray for her purity, — pray for her restoration, — pray for my forgiveness; or — no — why do men always want to push themselves to the front? — pray, Sukey, that my ill-training may bear no ill-fruit. And yet, God knows, I meant it all for the best."

He turned away and left her. She, poor woman, with the tears in her eyes, went back to her own room; and there, not in the artificial church, with the cold and perfunctory service, but by her own bedside, knelt and prayed for her brother and his darling, while sobs choked her utterance, and the tears coursed down her cheeks.

Hartley returned to his chamber, and found Mrs. Peck still there. The effect of the excitement upon her was that she was actually cleaning things. He tried to cheer her up, and then went to the police-station, where they heard what he had to say, made notes, looked wise, and promised great things, after he had given an exact description of her dress and appearance.

What next?

"Had she any friends?"

"None," Mrs. Peck had replied.

He knew of an acquaintance, at least; though Mrs. Peck had never heard of her. There was a certain Miss Blanche Elmsley, third-rate actress, *figurante*, any thing attached to the fortunes of Drury Lane Theatre. Her papa, who rejoiced in the name of Crump, was the proprietor of a second-hand furniture shop in Gray's Inn Road. He had not much furniture, but he sold any thing, bought any thing; and was not too proud to do odd jobs at the rate of a shilling an hour. Moreover, Mr. George Augustus Frederick Crump, christened after one of the late lamented royal princes, was a most respectable man, and highly esteemed in his quarter. He was the worshipful master of a lodge of Ancient Druids, and accustomed to take the vice-chair at a weekly harmonic meeting. His daughter Mary was a child to whom Venn, who knew everybody, had been accustomed to make little presents, years before. She was about five or six years older than Laura. When she grew up to woman's estate she obtained — chiefly through Venn's interest — a post as assistant in the refreshment department of one of the leading railway stations. Then he lost sight of her altogether till a twelve-month or so later, when Lollie came to him one night with a piteous tale: how that poor Mary, for some reason unknown to her, had been turned from her father's door, and was penniless and houseless. Then Hartley Venn — a Samaritan by legitimate descent, as much as the present Sheikh, Yakoob Shellaby — went to the rescue; the end being that he saw the poor girl through a

good deal of trouble, and, by dint of wonderful self-sacrifice, living on herbs and cold water for a quarter or so, managed to put things straight for her.

The Samaritan, you know very well, not only bound up the wounds which the wicked robbers had made, but poured in oil. Not content with that, he lifted the poor man, all bleeding as he was, upon his own beast, doubtless covered with a new and highly respectable saddle-cloth, trudging alongside, — and those roads of Palestine, unless it was the Roman road, were none of the best, mind you, — until he came to the nearest Khan, where he bargained with the landlord for a small sum. The priest and the Levite, I make no doubt, would have done exactly the same, but for the look of the thing. It would seem too disreputable for persons of their respectability to be seen tramping along the road with a bleeding man upon their private ass, bedabbling their saddle-cloth. Yet make no doubt that their hearts were deeply touched; and I think I can fancy the priest making a very fine point of it, in his way, next sabbath day's discourse. It would turn on the duty of being prepared.

Mary's father was the priest. So, with a pang at his heart and an oath on his lips, he told the girl to go, and never again to darken his doors.

She went. His respectability was saved. Close by, she met little Lollie on her way home. She knew her by sight, and told her some of the story. The rest we know.

Venn was her Samaritan.

Mary was sitting in her second-floor back, making a dress for the baby, and crooning a tune in as simple freshness of heart as if she had never sinned at all. The blessed prerogative of maternity is to heal, at least for the time, all wounds. Besides, we can't be always crying over past sins. When the sun shines, the birds will sing. In her child, Mary had forgotten her troubles. Man leaves father and mother, and cleaves to his wife. Woman leaves father and mother, husband and lover, and forgets them all, and cleaves to her little ones.

Venn came in, hurried and excited.

"Where is Lollie?" he asked. "Have you seen Lollie?"

"Your little girl, Mr. Venn? Oh, what has come to her?"

Hartley's last slender reed of hope was broken. He sat down, and dropped his face in his hands. Then he looked round, blankly.

"If I could find him!" he groaned — "if I could find him! By G—d! if I should but for once come across him somewhere!"

Polly understood in a moment.

"Don't say that, Mr. Venn. Don't tell me that Lollie, of all girls in the world" —

"Hush! Perhaps — perhaps — Mary, you know nothing of it?"

"God forgive me!" sobbed Mary. "Mr. Venn, I'd rather my little boy died in my arms; and then, Heaven knows, I'd lie down, and die myself. Lollie! Oh, it was she who brought me to you in all my trouble. What should I have been without her? Where should I be now?"

"I must go," said Venn, rising abruptly. "Think of her, my girl. If you can devise any plan for looking after her, tell me. If you can think of anybody or any thing, — remember that every penny I have in the world I will spend to bring her back. Where can I look for her — where?"

He spread out his hands in his distress, and walked backwards and forwards in the little room.

"Don't be angry with me, Mr. Venn, at what I'm going to say. She must have gone off with some one. No doubt he promised to marry her: they all do. And if he does it, you will have her back in a day or two, with her husband, asking for your forgiveness; and if he doesn't, why, then, — why then, Mr. Venn, don't let us think of it. But if she comes back, all wretched and tearful, will you forgive her, Mr. Venn? will you forgive her?"

"Forgive her? Is there any thing my child could do that I would not forgive? You don't understand, Mary. She is my life. I have no thought but for her. In all these years, while she has been growing up beside me, every hour in my day seemed to belong to the child. What could I not do for her? Let her come back, and all shall be as it was before; but, no! that, at least, cannot be. The fruit of the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, prevents that. Eden is shut out from us. But let her come back; and we may be but as another Adam and Eve, making aprons to hide the memories of our souls."

"Perhaps they were happy," said Mary the mother, "because they had children."

"I don't know," said Venn. "History says very little about it. Perhaps they were. Let us hope so. Good-by, girl."

She took his hand, and, out of her gratitude and sympathy, raised it to her lips. The action had all the grace of a duchess, though it was but in a poorly furnished lodging, — bedroom, sitting-room, and all in one, — and the performer was only a ballet-girl.

From her, Venn went to Lynn's rooms. These were at the top of an endless staircase in the Temple.

"You, Venn!" said Lynn, opening the door. "I thought it was the long-expected case. What has brought you here at this time of day?"

Venn sat down, and answered nothing. After a minute or so, which his thoughts turned into half an hour, he got up again.

"I must go," he said. "I've staid here too long."

He put on his hat, and made for the door, with staggering step. Then Lynn caught him by the arm, and forced him into an armchair.

"For God's sake, Venn, what is the matter?"

Hartley looked at him in a dazed way. Then he fairly fainted, falling forwards. It was two o'clock, and he had eaten nothing all day. Lynn lifted him, and laid him on the sofa, pouring water on his forehead, which was burning. Presently he recovered a little, and sat up.

"Do you remember our idle talk last night, Lynn?"

"Perfectly. What about it?"

"Do you remember what we said about women?"

"What about it?"

Venn was silent again. Then he went on, with a deep, harsh voice, —

"I found a little child. In my loneliness, and the despair that followed all my ruined hopes, I made her the one joy and comfort of my life."

"Laura?"

"I brought her up myself, and taught her all that I thought the child should know. I forgot one thing."

"Venn, what has happened?"

"I forgot religion. All the rules of right and wrong do not come by observation. The habit of fearing God comes by teaching. But I loved her, Lynn — I loved her. She looked to me as a kind of elder brother; but I — I loved her not as a little sister. I looked for a time when she should be old enough to hear the love story of a man nearly twenty years her senior. I thought to win her heart, and not her gratitude. So I was content to wait. Her only joy in life was to come to me. But I forgot that there are wolves abroad. If ever I meet the man. But it is idle threatening. Old friend of twenty years, if I thought you had done this thing, I would strangle you as you stand there."

"But, Venn — Venn, what is it?"

"I was reading a story in a novel the other day, — a French novel. There was a Laura in it, and a man: a foolish sort of story. She left him one evening, hanging upon his neck, vowing a thousand loves, showering kisses upon him. She said she was going to the seaside — to Dieppe —

somewhere for a fortnight. She wrote to him a fortnight later, when he expected her back, — told him in three lines that she had left him forever, that she could never see him again, that she was to be married to some one else. Not a word, you see, of regret. Nothing left, no memory at all of the days they had spent together. A foolish story. I laughed when I read it.

"He who was only a poor sort of loving fool, and believed that women could be true, sat down in his lonely room, and cried. Then he wrote to a post-office where she might possibly go and ask for letters, and told her to be happy; that he forgave her; that if any thing happened to her — any poverty, any distress — he was still her friend. I thought what an ass he was. Her name was Laura too. That must have been why I read the story. Laura — Laura — a lover's name."

"In Heaven's name! Venn, what has happened?"

"Women, you see," Venn went on, in a hard, unnatural voice, "require positive teaching. You must say to them, do this, do that, and avoid something else. I forgot this. I treated the girl as if she had been a boy."

"Life, you will observe, is a series of unexpected retributions. For every mistake you make, down comes the avenger. No quarter is given, and no warning. It seems hard when you first begin to understand it, doesn't it?"

"We have been accustomed to look at the disappointments of life as so much capital, — the occasion for saying clever things. Why, Jones makes fifty rhymes every time he fails, and I say fifty remarkable things. And you utter fifty oaths. Here is only another disappointment. We will have another brilliant Chorus next week. Life's disappointments are so many of a small kind, that when a big one comes — the biggest that can come — we really ought to be prepared."

"I loved her, Lynn, I loved her."

All the time he had been sitting on the sofa, talking in this incoherent way, with his eyes strained and his lips cracked. Then Lynn took him by the arm.

"Come back to Gray's Inn," he said. "We will take a cab."

He led him down the stairs, and took him back to his own chambers. When they got there, the old woman, still waiting for them, rushed forward.

"Have you found her, sir? Have you found her?"

And then Venn sat down in his old easy chair, and cried like a child.

"I think," he said, presently, recovering a little, "that I will go to bed. The kings

of Israel, whenever they experienced any little disappointment, used to do it, and turned their faces to the wall. Ahab, you remember, in that affair of his about the vineyard. I shall turn my face to the wall. When I was ill as a child I used, directly I got into bed, to fancy myself in a coach and four; and the relief was wonderful. Good-by, Lynn, it's very kind of you; but — but — well, you can go away now."

"I shall stay," said Lynn, not liking the way in which he talked. "I shall stay all night, and sleep on the sofa."

Venn went to bed; and his friend, getting a steak sent up at six, sat quietly waiting and watching. At midnight he stole into the bedroom. Venn was sleeping soundly, with his fair, smooth cheeks high up on the pillow. As Lynn bent over him, the lips of the sleeper parted; and, with that sweet, sad smile which was his greatest charm, he murmured, softly and tenderly

"My little girl — kiss me again."

CHAPTER XX.

Do you know the coast of Normandy? It is a country that everybody thinks he knows well. We have all been to Dieppe, some even to Havre. Dear friends, that is really not enough. What you do not know is the existence of a dozen little watering-places between Havre and Boulogne, all charming, all quiet, all entirely French. These secluded retreats are like the triangles in the sixth book of Euclid's immortal work, — they are all similar and similarly situated. Where the sea runs in and makes a bay, where a river runs down and mingles the fresh with the salt, where the cliffs on either side stoop to the earth and disappear in space, there lies the little fishing-town. What it must be like in winter, imagination vainly endeavors to realize; but in summer, between June and October, there are no pleasanter places for quiet folk to stay in. Right and left, the cliffs rise to a height of some hundreds of feet. You climb them in the morning after your coffee and brioche, and stride away in the fresh upland air, with the grass under your feet and the woods behind. As you go along, you see the girls milking the sleepy-eyed Norman cows, you salute the women going to market with their baskets, you listen to the lark, you watch the blue sea far away beyond, with perhaps a little fleet of fishing-boats. Presently you turn back, for the sun is getting hot. Then you go down to the shore and bathe. Augustine, the fat, the bunchy,

the smiling, the rosy-fingered, brings you a *maillot*. Clad in this comfortable garb, and throwing a sheet about you, you trip down the boards which lead to the sea, and enjoy a feeling of superiority when you feel all eyes turned to behold you swimming out to sea. Family groups are bathing together beside you, — father of family and circle of children, bobbing, with shrieks, up and down; next to them some ancient dame, of high Norman lineage and wondrous aspect, gravely bobbing, held by both hands by the Amphibious One, who spends his days in the water, and never catches rheumatism. Everybody bobbing. Then you go back to breakfast. The *table d'hôte* might be better, but it is wholesome. Here you become acquainted with strange fish, — conger eel, for instance; and you learn the taste of mussels. The claret might be a more generous wine, but it is light and sound. After your walk, you may drink a bottle for breakfast.

Presently you stroll into the town, and look around. Here is a fisherman's church. In the little chapel, as you go in, are the *ex voto* pictures, — they mean countless tears and anxiety. Here is the ship tossed by the storm; here the ship entering the port; here are the rags of a flag, the bits of an oar, — all the little memorials of an escape from danger, aided by Our Lady of the Sea, influenced by the prayers of the faithful. Are we in the nineteenth century? So, too, the Roman sailor offered his *ex voto* to Venus Marina; while yonder priest, in stole, alb, and dalmatic, may stand for his predecessor of Brindisium two thousand years ago, who chanted the service to his goddess in the self-same dress, and very likely in the self-same Gregorian. Verily, my readers, we take a long time to change.

There is a quay. Lazy sailors lie about and talk. There is a smell of soup in the air, curiously blending with the tar. Over the cobbled roads thunder the country carts with their bells. The diligence is preparing, with a tremendous clatter and bustle, to get under way; and where, in an English country town, would be dismal silence and sluggishness, are life, animation, activity.

At six you may dine; in fact, you must, if you want to dine at all. The dinner is the same as the breakfast. And after that you may go to the casino. Ah, the casino! It is the home of all dazzling pleasures. There is the theatre, with a stage the size of a dining-room table; then the ball-room, with a piano and violin for music, — no better music can be found; and there are the young bloods of the place, panting for the fray, with waxed mustache, and patent leather boots, the Don Juans of a thou-

sand harmless amourettes; for here, mark you, we have not the morals of Paris. And the young ladies. They are not pretty, the Norman girls, after our notions of beauty. Some of them are too big in the nose, some of them are flat-faced, some of them are inclined to be "hatchety;" but they are *gracieuses*. Say any thing you will of the Frenchwomen, but tell me not that they are clumsy. Always graceful, always at ease, always artistic. I believe, speaking as a bachelor, and therefore as a fool, that a Frenchwoman is, above all, the woman one would emphatically never get tired of. Pretty faces pall, pretty little accomplishments are soon known by heart. A loving heart may be no prevention against that satiety which cometh at the end of sweet things. In love, as in cookery, one wants a little — eh? a very little — sauce *piquante*. Now, the Frenchwoman can give it you.

And at eleven o'clock you may go to bed; because, if you sit up, you will be the only soul awake in all the town. They are all alike, as I said before. I have seen them all. The prettiest of them is Etretat, the sweetest of watering-places, with its little *châlets* perched on the hillsides, its perforated rocks, its sharp cliffs, and its gardens; but it is also the dearest. Reader of the middle class, sensible reader, who, like me, does not pretend to be a milord, go not to Etretat to stay. Go rather to little Yport, close by, where the *établissement* is no bigger than a family pew, and where in a day you will be the friend of all the good people — chiefly connected with the cotton, or perhaps the cider, interests — who are staying there for the benefit of the sea-breezes.

It was to Vieuxcamp that Philip took his bride. They arrived there the day after their marriage. Laura was too confused with the novelty of every thing to be able to think. She was wild with excitement. This, then, was the world. How big it was! These were the people who spoke French. Why, the little children talked it better than she did, after all her lessons! Then, the Norman caps, and the cookery, and the strangeness of it all. I don't believe there is any thing in the world — not even love's young dream, or love's first kiss, or the first taste of canvas-back, or the first oyster of the season, or the forbidden port, or a glass of real draught bitter after years abroad; or the sight of those you love, when you come home again; or the news that your play is accepted, or the first proof-sheet, or a legacy when you are sick with disappointment, or praise when you are dying with fatigue, or a laudatory review: there is not one of these delights —

I forgot to mention twins, but not even that — which comes up to the first joy of seeing a foreign land, and that land France.

Lollie saw some English children at Dieppe the morning after they came.

"O Philip!" she cried, "what a shame to bring those children here! Think of the happiness they will miss when they grow up."

That, as the Yankees say, is so.

He brought her by diligence from Dieppe to Vieuxcamp, and they began the usual life of the place. He had taken the best rooms in the hotel, where they could sit and look at the sea. Laura had not seen it since she went with Sukey to Deal, eight years ago. In the morning they bathed together in the pleasant French fashion. In the hot daytime they staid indoors, and read novels. In the evening, they went to the Casino.

At the *table d'hôte*, Philip's wife was quite silent for three days. Then, to his utter amazement, she turned to her neighbor, a lively little Frenchwoman, who had addressed some remark to her, and answered her quite fluently, and in perfect French.

"Where did you learn it, my darling?"

"I learned it at home. Mr. Venn and I used to talk; but, somehow, I could not say a word at first. Now I begin."

And then the French ladies all made much of her, admiring the sweet innocence of her beauty, and that fair wealth of hair, which she wore loose and dishevelled at breakfast, and neatly bound up for dinner.

On the very first morning after their arrival, Philip found her, on coming in from a walk, writing a letter to Venn.

"That is right," he said. "Tell Mr. Venn where we are. He will want to know more than your little note told him. Write all you can, darling; but tell him you are happy. Are you happy, my own?"

She smiled contentedly, and went on writing. It was a long letter, and took a good half-hour to write, though her facile pen seemed to run glibly enough over the paper. When it was finished, she folded and placed it in an envelope.

"Now, let us go and post it," she cried, looking for her hat.

Phil looked at his watch. It was a quarter to eleven.

"Better let me go, dear," he said: "it only wants a quarter of an hour to breakfast. I shall be ten minutes, and you will be ready to go down then."

She gave him the letter, and he went out.

On the way, the landlady of the hotel gave him a letter from England, which he opened and read. It was from MacIntyre.

"I thought it best not to take that note to Mr. V. It has been burnt instead. If I were you, all things considered, I would not let her write to him. Questions will be asked. Things perfectly legal in Scotland may not be so in England. From what I have learned of Arthur, who is his friend, Mr. V. is a man capable of making himself very disagreeable. *Don't let her write.*

Philip read it with a sinking heart. This man seemed to stand between himself and every effort at well-doing. He had firmly steeled himself to letting Venn know what he had done, and taking any consequences that might befall him. The last orders he had given were that the note was to be taken to Gray's Inn; and now the letter was burned, and the poor girl's guardian would believe that she had run away from him. At the first shock, Philip felt sick with dismay and remorse. Then he began to think of himself. Should the new letter be sent. He strolled along the esplanade by the seashore, sat down, and looked at it. The envelope was not yet dry. He opened it and took out the letter. Then he committed the first crime — unless the marriage was one — in his life. I mean the first thing which destroyed his own self-respect, and gave him a stronger shove downhill — see the philosophical remarks in a previous chapter — than any thing he had yet experienced. For he read the letter.

"MY DEAR MR. VENN, — I do not know how to begin my letter. You have heard my secret now, because Philip sent on my letter. I was so sorry not to be able to come with it myself. When I saw you on Tuesday, I came determined to tell you all, in spite of Philip's prohibition; but you would not hear it. And now I wish you had, because then you would have come yourself, and been present at my marriage. Yes, I am really and truly married. I cannot understand it at all. I keep turning my wedding-ring round and round my finger, and saying that I have done the very thing you wanted me to do. And then I feel that I was wrong in not telling you of it. Directly after the marriage we came over here, — Philip and I, — and are going to stay for another fortnight. I will tell you all about the place and the people when I see you; but it is all so strange to me, that I feel giddy thinking about it. And you will like Philip, I know you will; if only because he is so kind to me and loves me. It is all through your kindness. I can never say or write what I feel towards you for it all. You will always be first in my thoughts. We are not very rich, I believe; but we have enough to live upon, and we are going to be

happy. The old life has passed away, and all our pleasant days; but the new ones will be better, only you will have to come and see me now. I think I shall be very happy as soon as I hear that you are satisfied and pleased with what I have done. Write at once, and tell me that you are, dear Mr. Venn; and then I shall dance and sing. Let me always be your little girl. I had to keep the secret for Philip's sake; but he always promised that as soon as we were married you should know every thing.

"He is too good for me, too handsome, and too clever. Of course he is not so clever as you are: nobody is; and I do not think he has ever written any thing, — at least, he has never told me of any thing.

"Write to me at once, dear Mr. Venn, by the very next post that comes back. To-day is Saturday: I shall get your letter on Tuesday. Give my love to my grandmother: she will not miss me. And always believe me, dear Mr. Venn, your own affectionate and grateful little girl, —

"LOLLIE DURNFORD."

Philip's handsome face grew ugly as he read the letter, — ugly with the cloud of his negro blood. What business had his wife to write a letter so affectionate to another man? Jealousy sprang up, a full-blown weed, in his brain. What right had she to love another man? His nostrils dilated, his forehead contracted, his lips projected.

These were symptoms that accompanied the awakening of his lower nature.

Two men passed him as he sat on the beach. Quoth one to another, as they both looked in his face, —

"C'est probablement un Anglais?"

And the other made reply, —

"Je crois que c'est un mulâtre. Peut-être de Martinique."

He heard them, and his blood boiled within him. The lower nature was in command now. He tore the letter into a thousand fragments, and threw them into the air.

Then he resolved to go back, and tell a lie. At any cost — at the cost of honor, of self-respect — he would break off all connection with this man. His wife should not know him any longer, should not write to him a second time.

He strolled back, angry and ashamed, but resolved.

Lollie was waiting for him, dressed for breakfast. He kissed her cheek, and tried to persuade himself that he was acting for the best.

"And what did you say to Mr. Venn, darling?"

"I said that I was married, and happy,

and eager to get his letter to tell me he is pleased."

"Why did you not write to your grandmother, my dear?"

"Oh!" she replied lightly, "she will hear from Mr. Venn; and, besides, as she cannot read, what does it matter? You know, she never liked me at all; and only kept me with her, I believe, on account of Mr. Venn. I must have been a great trouble to her."

Caresses and kisses; and Philip, with the ease of his facile nature, put behind him his deceit and treachery to be thought of another day.

After all, letters do miscarry sometimes.

The honeymoon, married men of some standing declare, is wont to be a dreary season, involving so much of self-sacrifice and concession that it is hardly worth the trouble of going through it. It has some compensations. Among these, to Philip, was the real pleasure of reading all the thoughts of a pure and simple-minded girl. When he was under the influence of this maidenly mind, his mind — Augean stable though it was — seemed cleansed and purified. The prompting of evil ceased. The innocence of his youth renewed itself, and seemed to take once more, with a brighter plumage, a heavenward flight, — only while he was in her presence; and, as we have seen, a few words from his evil genius had power enough to make him worse than he was before. For the stream of Lollie's influence was a shallow one: it had depth enough to hide the accumulations of mud, but not enough to clear them away. Like the transformation scene in a theatre, for a brief five minutes all is bright, roseate, and brilliant: before and after, the yellow splendor of the gaslight. With a lie hot upon his lips, with a new sin fresh upon his conscience, Philip yet felt happy with his wife. It is not impossible. The poor habitual criminals of the thieves' kitchen are happy in their way, boozing and smoking, though the policemen are gathering in pursuit, and they know their days of freedom are numbered.

"Tell me," said Philip, "did Mr. Venn never make love?"

"What a question!" she replied, laughing. "Mr. Venn, indeed! Why, he is as old — as old — No one ever made love to me except yourself. But take me down to breakfast. Philip, when we go back to London, will your own relations be ashamed of me?"

"I have no relations, dear, except a cousin. If he is ashamed of you, I shall wring his neck. But he will be proud of you, as I am proud of my pretty wife. But

for the present you must be content with your stupid husband. Can you?"

"Don't, Philip," said his wife. "And the bell has gone ten minutes."

And on the Sunday — next day — Lollie got a new experience of life.

It was after breakfast. They were strolling through the town. The bells were ringing in the great old church, so vast and splendid that it might have been a cathedral. And in one of the little streets, where there was a convent school, there was assembling a procession — all of girls, dressed in white, and of all ages and sizes, from the little toddler who had to be led, to the girl of twenty, gorgeous in her white muslins and her lace veil. As they stopped to look, the procession formed. At its head marched the toddler, supported by two a little taller than herself; and then, wedge fashion, the rest followed, the nuns with their submissive, passionless faces, like the sheep of sacrifice, following after. And as they defiled into the street, they began to sing some simple French ditty, — not more out of tune than could be expected from a choir of French country girls, — and went on to the church. Philip and Laura followed. The girls passed into the church. As the darkness of the long nave seemed to swallow them up, a strange yearning came over the girl.

"Philip, I should like to go into the church."

"Do, my dear, if you like. I shall go and stroll along the beach. You can go in and see the ceremony, whatever it is, and then come back to the hotel."

She walked hesitatingly into the church. A man with a cocked hat and a pike in his hand beckoned her, and gave her a seat. She sat down, and looked on. A tall altar, garnished with flowers and lights, men with colored robes, boys with incense, and an organ pealing. In all her life of eighteen years, she had never been inside a church: in all her education, there had been no word of religion. Now, like another sense, the religious principle awakened in her; and she knew that she was, for the first time, worshipping God.

When the people knelt, she knelt, wondering. Always, the organ pealed and rolled among the rafters in the roof, and the voices of the singers echoed in her ears, and the deep bass of the priest sounded like some mysterious incantation. It was so grand, so sweet, this gathering of the folk with one common object. Her heart went up with the prayers of the Church, though she knew nothing of what they meant. Lines from poetry crossed her brain: words from some authors she had read. The Madonna and the Child looked

on her smiling: the effigy of our Saviour seemed to have its eyes, full of tenderness and pity, fixed upon her. When next she knelt, the tears poured through her fingers.

The service ended. All went away except Laura. She alone sat silent and thinking.

"Madame would like to see the church?" asked the beadle.

She shook her head.

"Let me sit a little longer," she said, putting a franc into that too sensitive palm.

"Madame is right. It is cool in here." And left her.

She was trying to work it all out. She had discovered it at last, the secret which Venn's carelessness had kept from her. She knew the grave defect of her education: she had found the religious sense.

She rose at last, refreshed as one who, suffering from some unknown disease, suddenly feels the vigor of his manhood return. And when she rejoined her husband, there shone upon her face a radiance as of one who has had a great and splendid vision.

For the child had wandered by accident into the fold.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN answer was to be expected from Venn in three or four days. Laura passed these in suspense and anxiety. Every morning she went to the church and heard the service, daily gaining from her artistic instincts a deeper insight into the mystery of religion. After the service, she would go back to her husband, and pour into his wondering ears the new thoughts that filled her heart. He, for his part, sat like a Solomon, and shook his head, only half understanding what she meant. Nor did she quite know herself. The instinct of adoration, of submission; the sense of a protecting power; the sweetness of church music; the gorgeous ceremonial to which it was wedded,—all these things coming freshly on the girl's brain confused and saddened her, even while they made her happier. For in these early days, when every thing was new and bright, she was happy,—save for that gnawing anxiety about Venn.

Tuesday came, and Wednesday, but no letter; and her heart fell.

"I shall write again, Philip. He must be ill. He would never else have left my letter unanswered."

Philip changed color; for in the early days of dishonor men can still feel ashamed.

"If you like," he said, with an effort.

"Yes, write again, dear. We will try one more letter before we go back to London. Sit down, and write it now."

The second letter was harder to write than the first; but she got over the beginning at last, and went on. After repeating all she had said in the first, she began to talk of the church:—

"I have been to church. O Mr. Venn! why did we not go together? There is no place where I am so happy. It seems as if I were protected—I don't know from what—when I am within the walls, and listening to the grand organ. When we go back to England, you will have to come with me.—Do not, dear Mr. Venn, keep me any longer in suspense. Write to me, and tell me you forgive me. I seem to see, now, more clearly than I did. I see how wrong I was, how ungrateful, how unkind to you; but only tell me you forgive me, and ease my heart."

This time, with less compunction, her husband quietly took the letter to a secluded spot under the cliffs, and tore it up. For, having begun, he was obliged to go on. Laura, he was determined, should have nothing whatever more to do with Mr. Venn. She should be his, his own, his only. Some men make angels of their wives. These are the highest natures: perhaps on that account the greatest fools in the eyes of the world. Philip did not commit this noble fault. He knew his wife was a woman, and not an angel at all. Even in those moments when she tried to pour out all her thoughts to him,—when, like Eve, she bared her soul before his eyes, and was not ashamed,—he only saw the passing fancies of an inexperienced girl; played with them, the toys of a moment, and put them by. Of the depths of her nature he knew nothing, and expected nothing: only he was more and more passionately fond of her. For it seemed as if the change had made her more lovely. Bright and beautiful as she was before, she was more beautiful now. Some of Philip's five hundred went to accomplish this change; for she was now well-dressed, as well as tastefully dressed,—a thing she had never known before,—and was woman enough to appreciate accordingly. She was animated, bright, and happy, except for the anxiety about the letter; for no answer came to the second.

"We will not try again," said Philip. "Promise me faithfully, my dear, that you will not write again without my knowledge."

"I promise, Philip. Of course I will not."

"When we go back to England, perhaps, we may think proper to make another attempt; but we have our own dignity to keep up," said her husband grandly.

Laura only sighed. If Mr. Venn would but write!

Sunday came round, and there was still no letter. Laura grew very sad. Could it be possible that Mr. Venn was angry with her? Was it possible that he would not forgive her? She sat in the church with a sinking heart. For one thing she had already found out, — a bitter thing for a young wife, though yet it was but an uneasy thought, — a sort of pin-pricking, whose importance she did not yet know, that her husband would never be to her what Hartley Venn had been.

Presently the service was finished. She sat on, while the people all went out of the church. As she sat, she watched the women, one after the other, going to the confessional. They had, then, some one in whom they could confide, some one to advise, some one who would listen patiently to their little tales of sorrow and anxiety.

She felt desolate; because, now there was no longer Mr. Venn, there was nobody. Had Philip touched her heart but a little, had she been able to love him, she would not have had the thought; but she did not love him. There was between the pair the barrier which only love can destroy between two human beings.

The women went away. It was getting late. The confessor — an old priest with white hair — came out, stretching himself, and suppressing a little yawn. The confidence of the wives and mothers had been more than usually wearisome to the good man. As he came out, Laura stood before him.

"Hear me too," she whispered in French.

He looked at her in astonishment.

"Madame is English — and Catholic?"

"I am English. I am not a Catholic. Hear my confession too, and advise me. Do not send me away."

"Let us sit here — not in the confessional, my child. That is only for the faithful. Tell me — you have doubts; you would return to the ancient faith?"

"I want advice. You have given it to all those women. Give some to me."

"Tell me how I can help you."

She told him all her little story.

"I did not know that by marrying him I should separate myself from Mr. Venn. I thought to please him — I did, indeed. Oh! what shall I do — what shall I do?"

"My poor child, you talk to an old priest. I know nothing of love."

"Love! it is always love. What is love?"

I love Mr. Venn because I am his ward, his daughter — because he is my life," she said simply.

The priest was puzzled.

"I think you must go to see him directly you get back to England. Consult your husband, and obey him. Your — your guardian never took you to church, then?"

"No, I never came to church till I entered this one. It has made me happier."

"It always does, — it always does. Come to see me again. Come to-morrow. When you go to England, my dear young lady, search for some good and faithful priest who will teach you the doctrines of the Faith. But obey your husband in all things; that is the first rule."

She rose and left him, a little comforted.

This Sunday was a great day for Vieuxcamp, the day of the annual races. These were not, as might be expected, conducted on the turf as is our English practice — perhaps because there was no turf, except on the mountain side. The Vieuxcamp races are held on the road behind the long promenade, which stretches from the two piers to the Casino, about a quarter of a mile. The course is hard, as may be imagined; but, as the horses are used to it, I suppose it matters little.

Philip was as excited as a boy over the prospect of a little sport, and was engaged all the morning in discussing events at the Casino. The preparations were on a magnificent scale. Flags were placed at intervals. *Gardes champêtres*, if that is their name, were stationed to keep the course. There were stewards, who began to ride about in great splendor, very early in the morning; the ladies drove in from the country, dressed in their very best; the fisherwomen had on their cleanest caps; and the day was clear and bright.

"Come out, Laura," said her husband, bounding into the room. "I've got a splendid place for you to see the fun."

"I don't want to, Philip. I think I would rather sit here, and read."

"Oh, nonsense!" he urged; "it will do you good. Come."

But she refused; and he went by himself, leaving her to solitude and her reflections.

The races began at two. First came a velocipedists' race, which was fairly run and gallantly won, though not by the ladies' favorite, — a tall, good-looking young fellow, with a splendid velocipede and an elaborate get-up. A ragged little urchin from the town, on a ramshackle old two-wheel, beat him by a couple of yards. Then there came a running race, — four times up and down the course, which made a mile. The competitors were chiefly the fisher-boys of the place. The poor lads,

good enough in their boats, are weak in such unaccustomed sports as running. Philip looked at them for a little while, and then turned to his neighbor, and offered to bet twenty francs on the boy who was last, though they all kept pretty close together. The bet was taken. Philip's favorite was a man, older than the others, who were mere boys. He was a little fat fellow, close upon forty, with a funny look on his face, as if every step was taking out the last bit left. But he kept up; and, just at the middle of the last course, he opened his mouth quite wide, gave a sort of suppressed groan, and put on the most comical, quaint, and unwieldy spurt ever seen; but it landed him first, and Philip pocketed his Napoleon.

Then they had a walking race, with some of the school lads and others. It was severe upon the sailors. From time to time one would burst into a run, and be turned out of the race by a steward who rode behind. And just at the finish — there being only three boys left, and all close together — the middle one slipped and fell. With the greatest presence of mind he kicked out hard, and brought the other two down upon him. Then they all laid hold of each other, trying to be up first, and, forgetting the terms of the contest, ran in together, amid inextinguishable laughter. That prize was not adjudged.

Then pony races; and then the grand trotting-match, of which the Normans are so fond. It was not like the American institutions, inasmuch as the horses were simply harnessed to the heavy carriages of every-day life, and the pace was a good deal under a mile in two minutes. Still, the interest and delight of the people were immense. Philip made his selection out of the animals, and offered his neighbor to take the odds against him. It was his neighbor's own horse. He was delighted.

"Come," he said, dragging Philip away by the arm, — "come, we will get the odds."

And so Philip found himself in the centre of a gesticulating crowd, making a little book on the trotting-match.

Philip had his faults, as we have seen; but an ignorance of horseflesh was not one of them. That day he went to his wife with a flushed face, having come out of the *mêlée* thirty Napoleons the richer. He might as well have tried to communicate his enthusiasm to a Carmelite nun, because the girl had no more power of understanding the excitement of betting. There was, therefore, one point, at least, in which there would be no community of interests. After dinner Philip went to the Casino, and played billiards with his new friends,

while his wife sat at home, and read and meditated. It was the first evening she had been left by herself; but she was not lonely. She had some pretty French novel of a religious tone, — there are not too many of them; and she was happily passing over the bridge that leads from ignorance and indifference to faith. In what creed? She knew not: it mattered not. Faith is above dogma. So while she read, pondered, and prayed, her husband smoked, drank, and gambled.

He had not come back at ten, so she put on her hat, and went to look at the sea. No one was on the beach. The waves came swelling gently in with their soft, sad murmur, as the Sisyphæan stones rolled up the beach and back again. The hoarse voices of the sailors on the quay, a quarter of a mile away, sounded even musical in the distance. The air was warm and sweet. The moonless sky was set with stars, like diamonds, seeming to fall back into illimitable depths. Sitting there, the girl gave herself up to the thoughts newly born within her, — thoughts that could produce no echo in the heart of her husband, — thoughts without words, too deep, too precious, too sweet, for words.

When the clock struck eleven she was roused by the carillon from her meditations, and went slowly back to the hotel. As she passed through the hall to the staircase she heard her husband's voice, loudly talking in the little room on the right, where lay the papers and journals. There was the *cliquetis* of glasses and the popping of soda.

A cold feeling stole over her, she knew not why; and she went up to bed alone, saddened and melancholy. It was the first real glimpse of the great gulf between herself and the man with whom her fate was linked.

A week after this, no letter having come from Mr. Venn, they went back to London; for Phil's five hundred had walked away, — thanks to the *écarté* of the last few days, — and he had barely enough left to pay his hotel-bill.

There was still another five hundred which he might draw from his agent, and he had his commission.

And after that?

CHAPTER XXII.

PHILIP took his wife to a little cottage near Notting Hill. She was pleased with the place and the furniture, and the little garden, but more pleased still with the prospect of seeing Mr. Venn again. She

talked about it all the evening; wondered what she should say; and made her husband silently furious with jealousy and foolish rage. But he said nothing. Only in the morning, when, after breakfast, she came down to him dressed, and announced her intention of going to Gray's Inn at once, he took a line, and sternly forbade her to go at all.

"But you promised, Philip."

"I did," he answered. "But your letters, Laura: where is his answer to them? Listen to me, — one word will be enough. You shall not go and see this man until he answers your letters, or till I give you leave."

She sat down, and burst into tears. Philip, not unkindly, took off her hat, and laid it on the table.

"It is hard, Laura," he said, — "I know it is hard for you; but it is best. He has given you up."

"He has *not* given me up," said the girl. "He would never give me up — never — never. He loved me better than you can ever dream of loving me. I am his — altogether his. You made me promise not to tell him, — you made me leave him."

"Why does he not answer your letters?"

"Something has happened. O Philip! let me go."

"I will not let you go," returned her husband. "You, in this new religious light that you have got, know at least, that you are to obey your husband. Obey me now."

She sat still and silent. It was what the priest had told her. Yes, she must obey him.

"For how long?" she said. "O Philip! for how long?"

"For two or three months, my dear. Forgive me: I am harsh, — I am unkind; but it is best. Besides, other things have happened. You must not go. Promise me again."

She promised.

He took his hat. His hands were trembling, and his cheeks red.

"I am going to my club on business," he said. "I shall not be back till late this evening. Kiss me, Laura."

She kissed him mechanically, — obedient in every thing; and he went away.

A bad omen for their wedded life. It is the first day at home; and her husband, unable to endure the torture of his conscience about the letters, and the sorrow of his wife, flies to the club — his club of gamblers and sharpers — for relief.

It is late when he returns, — a heavy loser at play, — his cheek flushed with wine, not with shame.

O Philip!

"Tu tibi supplicium, tibi tu rota, tu tibi tortor."

Among the earliest callers on Mrs. Durnford — in fact, her only visitor — was Mr. Alexander MacIntyre. He came dressed in a sober suit of pepper and salt; and, sitting with his hat on the floor and his hand supporting one knee, he began to discourse to Laura — for her husband was not at home — on the topics of the day.

"Did you take my note to Mr. Venn?" asked the girl, interrupting him.

"That note? Oh, yes, I remember! Yes: I had not the pleasure of seeing the gentleman, because he was out. I dropped it into the letter-box."

Laura sighed. There was, then, no doubt. He had received all her letters, and would write to her no more.

"Has there been no answer, Mrs. Durnford?"

"None," she replied. "And I have written to him twice since then; but he will not take any notice of my letters."

The tears stood in her eyes.

"I have promised Philip not to write again without his consent. He says we have done as much as we can. I don't know, — I wish I could go round myself and see Mr. Venn."

"Oh! you must not think of doing that," interposed Mr. MacIntyre hastily.

"So Philip says; but I shall think about it."

Presently she began to ask him questions about himself. It was a new thing for the philosopher to have anybody taking an interest in his movements; and he perhaps "expanded" more than was absolutely prudent.

"What am I to do?" he said. "I am getting old: my hair is gray. People want to know all sorts of things that it is not always easy to tell."

"But the simple truth can always be told, and that ought to satisfy them."

"There," said the man of experience, with a curious look, "is exactly the point. It is just the simple truth that will not satisfy these sharks. I might write a book, but what about? People only buy books written on the side of morality; and the moral ranks are so crowded that there seems little chance of getting in with new lights."

"But you would not write on any other side, surely?"

"Obsaive, my dear young leddy; if there ever were such a thing as a clever scoundrel, who had the moral strength to take his stand as such, and write an autobiography without the usual sacrifice to supposed popular opinion, he might make a fortune. A general case — a heepothetical case only; but one which occurred to me. I mean, of course, an unscrupulous

man, without religion of any kind, — such a man as, to secure his own safety, would ruin any one else who stood in his way, and do it without a pang.”

“I should hope no such persons exist. Why are we talking about such creatures!”

“They do exist. I have met them, — in the colonies. Mrs. Durnford, if ever you should come across such a man, remember my words. They would rather do a good turn than a bad one; but if the bad turn has to be done for their own good, why — then it must.”

“But go on about yourself.”

“About myself, then. I have a small sum of money, the fruits of many years of careful living and economy.”

O Mr. MacIntyre! was not this a superfluous evasion of truth?

“This small amount is rapidly decreasing; what I shall do when it is gone I do not know. It is my rule through life, Mrs. Durnford, and I recommend it to your careful consideration, never to decline the proffers of fate. Very often, behind the drudgery of a position which fortune puts into your hands, may be found, by one who knows how to take an opportunity, the road to wealth, if not to fame; now I think nothing of it. What does it matter? You do great things; at least, popular things. You get money, — you are asked to make speeches at dinners. When you die, your friends write your life and distort your character. Bah! The only thing worth living for is money. Get money — get money. Be comfortable; eat, drink, enjoy all the senses of nature, and care for nothing else. That is what the city people do, in spite of their snug respectability.”

“Mr. MacIntyre, is this the faith that Scotch clergymen teach?”

He began to think that perhaps Laura was not sufficiently advanced to accept all his views.

“Is your religion nothing?” she asked. “Is it nothing to lead a life of sacrifice and self-denial like the nuns I have seen in France? Is there no sacred duty of life but to make money? Surely, Mr. MacIntyre, — surely these are not the things you preach in your church?”

“You are right,” he replied: “they are not the things I preach in my church. Forgive my inconsiderate speech. I say sometimes more than I mean.”

But the conversation left a bad impression on Laura, and she began to regard the man with something like suspicion.

As the weeks went on, she found herself, too, left a good deal alone. Philip was growing tired of her. Her sadness, her coldness, were silent reproaches to him; and he neglected her more and more.

One night he entertained a party of friends. On that occasion he insisted on her keeping up stairs all the evening, without explaining why. They staid till three. She could not sleep till they went away, being kept awake by their noisy laughter and talk. Philip came up when the last was gone.

“I’m an unlucky Devil,” he murmured, pacing to and fro.

“What is it, Philip?” asked his wife.

“Nothing you understand, my dear; unless you can understand what dropping three ponies means.”

“No, Philip, not in the least.”

He put out the light, and was asleep in five minutes.

The clouds grew thick in Laura’s sky. She could not understand horse-racing and betting. She took not the smallest interest in events and favorites. On the other hand, Philip took no interest in what she did: never asked her how she spent the day, never took her out with him, never gave her his confidence. At least, however, he was kind; never spoke harshly to her, never ill-treated her, only neglected her. This was not what the girl pined and sickened for. Philip occupied her thoughts very little. She longed for the old life. She longed for the freedom of her talks with the only man she could talk to. She was solitary in spirit. She was beginning to feel the misery of mating with low aims. She stood on a higher level than her husband, and she did not have that perfect love for him which sometimes enables a woman to stoop and raise him with her.

The new and congenial society of gentlemen more or less interested in the noble and exciting sports of our country, to which Philip’s friends had introduced him when he retired from his old club, was banded together under the title of the Burleigh Club. To the name of Burleigh the most captious can take no exception. To such members as the name suggested any thing, its associations were stately and dignified. To the majority, for whom it meant nothing beyond being the patronymic of a noble house and the name of their club, it did as well as any other. It looked well, embossed in colors on the club-note paper. By any other name, the Burleigh could not have smelt more sweet. And another name, by which it was not uncommonly called, had been bestowed on it by a body of gentlemen who, though not members themselves, had heavy claims upon many who were. The ring men dubbed it, before it had existed a twelve month, The Welshers’ Retreat. The members, recognizing the happiness of the sobriquet, jocularly took the new title into favor; and Philip’s club

had thus two names, — interchangeable at pleasure, — always understood, and the latter for choice.

This was Philip's club. A tall, narrow-fronted house in the centre of club-land; what an auctioneer would describe as "most eligibly situate." Outside, the quietest and most respectable club in London, — Quakerlike in the sober sadness of its looks. Inside, a gambler's paradise. Day at the Burleigh begins at three o'clock in the afternoon. The blinking waiters would prophecy the speedy ruin of anybody who required their services before that hour. It is the custom of the club for members to leave it at any time, but never to enter it till two or three hours after noon.

Breakfasts are served till five, P.M., suppers till six, A.M. Between these hours a smart Hansom can always be had opposite the door. Business begins in the pool-room at half-past three; the chat is animated at five, and very lively between six and seven. Then the men go away to dinner, to return any time after ten to whist, loo, hazard, blind-hookey, — any thing that can be gambled at. Rules? The code is short. It is summed up in this one regulation, — betting debts must be paid on the usual settling days; card debts not later than the next day after they have been incurred. "Complaints of the infraction of this rule, on being referred to the committee, will render the defaulting member liable to expulsion." And they do expel. Oh, honorable men, how admirable, how necessary, is your rule! In this way the honor of the Burleigh is kept sweet. For the rest, you may do as you like: every member is a law unto himself; their club is Liberty Hall. What manner of men, it may be asked, is it that people this little paradise?

The members of the Burleigh are young and old. Postobit has just heard of his election at twenty. Leatherflapper, one of the fathers of the society, is seventy-three. They are rich and poor. Four-in-hand, with the string of forty thoroughbreds in training at Newmarket, and the rents of twenty thousand acres to keep them and himself upon; and Philip Durnford, with five hundred pounds at his agents, and his shovel in his hand to dig it out with, both belong. They number in their ranks the richest and the poorest, the kindest and cruelest, the most unimpeachably respectable and the most undeniably shady gentlemen, in these kingdoms. In some clubs the elders are unsociable, crusty old hunkers. Not so here. They are so communicative, so ready to teach all they have learnt, and to tell all they know, that it is quite beauti-

ful to see. Every man disposed to turn misanthrope should witness it. It always goes straight to my heart to see old Leatherflapper taking young Postobit in hand, and putting him up to every wrinkle on the board. True, there is a price to be paid — understood, never expressed: a fee for experience. But what that is worth having on earth is to be had for nothing? You would like to be introduced to this company of wise and benevolent men? You know their faces well. They are to be studied at every race-meeting, seen in the Park on sunny days, at German spas, at Hurlingham, — everywhere where excitement can be bought. And the bond that makes them such friends and such enemies, — you guess it: Gambling. The universal passion. The passion of all times of life, from earliest youth to latest age; of all places, from Christian London to Buddhist Yeddo; of all periods, from the first recorded tradition of savage life till the Archangel shall sound the last trumpet; of men and women, from the tramp card-seller, who bets his sister two pennies to one against a favorite for a race, to the nobleman who stakes a fortune on a cast of the dice; the miser, the spendthrift, the stock-jobber, the prince, — gambling has joys for all.

So the Burleigh was founded for play that might run to any height, for games prohibited at other places; as a rendezvous for every gentleman who wanted a little excitement, a place where there should always be "something doing." You must know the members by certain characteristic habits and ways they have. They breakfast late; they are fond of a devil early in the day; they take "pick-me-ups." In the daytime they are busy with their books. Notes addressed in female hands lie waiting for their arrival in the morning, the writing being generally of such a kind as to suggest a late acquisition of the art of penmanship. They have a keen, cold look about the eyes, where the crow's-feet gather early. For the most part they dress very carefully; though sometimes, just a day in advance of the fashion, they affect drab or brown gaiters and cloth-topped boots; carry, in this year of grace, their walking-canes by the ferule; and smoke eternally. From these gentlemen Philip's companions were chosen.

This was his club; this the place where he spent his days and nights, a short month after his marriage, while his wife staid at home, or, if she went out at all, was afraid to go far for fear of meeting Mr. Venn. In this company, starting in July with his five hundred pounds and the proceeds of his com-

mission, — for he sold out, — he was trying to make hay while the sun did not shine, and melting it all away.

He kept no accounts; but kept on digging at the little heap, ignorant and careless of how much was left. His great hope lay in his pluck and skill in playing cards, and betting on horse-races. He was often advised by Mr. MacIntyre, who had the useful talent of clear-headedness, and used to come to Notting Hill about Philip's break-fast-time; and then the two would sit and go through the "Calendar" and "Ruff's Guide," while the neglected girl looked on, and wondered what it was they talked about. It was one of her great sorrows at this time that she had no books to read, — none of her old books; none of those old poets, which she and Mr. Venn used to pore over in the summer evenings, while the shadows fell upon the dingy old court of the Inn. Philip, who seemed to have given up his old reading tastes, had only a few novels. She had never read any novels at all until she went to France. Phil's did not please her. They were barrack novels, stories of camp-life, sporting stories, — books to her without interest. She could not read them, and put them down one after another, — falling back upon the piano, for which she had no music, and could only play the things she knew.

MacIntyre saw what was coming. Philip was plunging; and his method, infallible on paper, as the experience of twenty seasons proved, did not work quite perfectly in practice.

Mr. MacIntyre had seen this from the first. In the multitude of his experiences he had tried the martingale, new to Philip, even before that young gentleman was born. Like his pupil, he had been fascinated by it. The lever that was to raise him to wealth and power, so beautifully simple, so utterly impracticable.

He remonstrated with Philip, pointing out the rocks ahead. But he spoke to a deaf man.

"I know better. It's my cursed luck. I'm sure to warm the ring at ——" Philip urged. Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, he added, "And if my luck sticks to me, why — at the worst I shall pay up; and then Laura and I will go away somewhere, borrow money of Arthur, and become farmers in New Zealand, or keep a shop in Ballarat, or mock the hairy-faced baboon somewhere. We shall do. The world is wide."

"It is, Phil. I have found it so. The world is wide — and hungry."

Mr. MacIntyre took the book again, and totted up the amount that Philip had lost at his last meeting. Then he made a little

note of it on a slip of paper, and put it into his pocket.

"Phil," he said, with an insinuating air, "I hope you have not lost much since you came home."

He changed color.

"I've dropped more than four hundred at the club, and a hundred and fifty one night here, when I had those fellows to play loo: besides that pill at the last meeting."

Mr. MacIntyre shook his head. When he went home, he made a little sum in arithmetic.

"When I consider," he said to himself, "that in $a-b$, b is greater than a , I'm afraid that Phil is likely to be up a tree, and my great card may very likely be played to advantage."

He went up to dine a few nights after this talk. Laura was charming, in a fresh, bright dress and in better spirits than usual. Philip, in one thing, had been disappointed in his wife. He had promised himself the trouble of teaching her the little courtesies of life, — the ordinary accomplishments, perhaps her mother tongue. He never made a greater mistake. She came to him a lady ready to his hand: in all points an accomplished, refined, well-educated lady, how far superior to the ordinary run of young ladyhood he hardly knew.

The little dinner went off pleasantly; and, when Laura left them in the little dining-room, both men were pleased. She sat down in the drawing-room, and played while they talked over their wine. She played on till the clock struck ten; then she waited till eleven; then she opened the door timidly, and looked in. Philip, flushed in the face, was making calculations on paper. Mr. MacIntyre, with face very much more flushed, had a long clay pipe in his mouth, not lighted, at which he was solemnly sucking.

"By Jove!" said Phil. "I thought I was a bachelor again. Come in, Laura, come in."

MacIntyre rose solemnly, holding by the table-cover.

"The shoshiety of leddies is — what'sh wanted — ceevileeze the world. Ye will obsairve — at the 'vershety of which I am — member — Master of Arts, — they always obsairved that the shoshiety of leddies — Phil, ye drunken deevil, whaur's my tumbler?"

Laura looked at him with amazement. The reverend gentleman was hopelessly drunk, — as drunk as any stonemason in Puddock's Row. Port, followed by whiskey toddy, had produced this lamentable effect.

"All right," said Phil. He was not drunk himself; but, as policemen say, he

had been drinking. "All right, darling. Here, old bag of evil devices, put on your hat, and try to tie your legs in as many knots as you can on your way home."

"Shir," said the MacIntyre, putting the bowl of the pipe into his mouth, "apologeeze. This is — this is — eh? — pershnal."

"To-morrow," said Phil. "Don't be frightened, Laura."

For his reverence made a sudden lurch in her direction, inspired neither by animosity, nor yet by friendship, nor by any amorous inclination, but solely by the toddy.

"I was shtudying" —

"Yes — yes — we know. Don't trouble yourself to say good-night."

Philip pushed him down-stairs, and out of the door, and returned.

"O Phil! how could you?"

"Well, dear, he did it himself. I always let the MacIntyre have the full run of the bottle: so did my father."

"But he is a clergyman."

"My dear wife," her husband exclaimed, "*they all do it in private life.*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

ABOUT the same time that Philip Dormer, Lord Chesterfield, was bringing the powers of his great mind to the alteration of Old Style into New Style by making our English year begin on the first of January instead of the twenty-fifth of March, and cheating the common people of eleven good days of the year of grace 1752, his right trusty and well-beloved friend, my Lord Bath, after spending ten days at Newmarket, delivered himself of a sentiment. His lordship was pleased to remark of his favorite sport, that "it is delightful to see two, or sometimes more of the most beautiful animals of creation struggling for superiority, stretching every muscle and sinew to obtain the prize and reach the goal; to observe the skill and address of the riders, who are all distinguished by different colors of white, blue, green, red, or yellow, sometimes spurring or whipping, sometimes checking or pulling to give fresh breath and courage. And it is often observed that the race is won as much by the dexterity of the rider as the vigor and fleetness of the animal." The flourishing era of the English turf dates from the time of this memorable saying of Lord Bath's; and it is doubtful if the change in the calendar introduced by Lord Chesterfield has had one tithe of the effect upon manners and society that this new fashion set by Lord Bath of patronizing horse-races

all over the country has been the means of bringing about.

It is still as delightful as it was in the days of the second Charles or the second George to stand on that magnificent expanse, Newmarket Heath, and watch, from the rising ground at the top of the town, or from the A.F. winning post, the struggles "of two or sometimes more of the most beautiful animals of creation," though the "skill and address of the riders" are not always turned to the account of making the "beautiful animals," they bestride stretch "every muscle and sinew to obtain the prize," as seems to have been the custom in the innocent days Lord Bath knew. Probably, in his lordship's time, roping, as an art based on scientific deductions, had not been invented, though his description mentions "checking and pulling," but it is for the now obsolete custom of giving "fresh breath and courage." What the noble author would say if he saw a field of thirty horses facing the starter for a fifty pound Maiden Plate, T. Y. C. (A. F.), and his distinguishing colors "of white, blue, green, red, or yellow" complicated and modernized into "French gray, scarlet hoops and chevrons," or "black, white sleeves, death's head, and crossbones," we do not care to speculate upon. In his time, honest races were run over four and six mile courses; a match was the favorite description of race; betting was not a profession; and the scum did not invade the sacred precincts of the Duke of Rutland's heath. A noble sport was in the hands of noble men.

Now —

Well, this is hardly my business.

"Obsairve," said Mr. MacIntyre, speaking to his pupil, Philip Durnford, above a hundred years later, "the fascination of this noble sport. You never knew a man in your life who had once tasted the delights of the turf who did not return to them again as soon as he had the means. There is something about it that no man can resist, break him as often as you like. If he has got the money to go racing, and bet, he goes racing, and bets. I knew a man who had three several fortunes, and lost them all gambling on the turf," Mr. MacIntyre proceeded to say; "and Phil, ye'll obsairve that when he came into a fourth, he went and did likewise with that one also."

Like every idle young man with the command of cash, and the slightest possible amount of egging on, Philip Durnford was inclined to fiddle a bit at long odds. He had, on some score or so of occasions, taken a long shot, backed a tip or a fancy, before he had become the instrument in

the hands of Providence of rescuing Mr. MacIntyre from his advertising agency. But he was not sweet upon the practice, for he had hardly ever won. It is notorious that, at all other sorts of gambling, a man invariably wins at first. This is not so in wagering upon horses; and Philip, with the common inclination to bet, and his full share of love for the sport, felt a little soured by his experience. Now, part of the universal scholarship of Mr. MacIntyre was an interest in horse-flesh, a knowledge of betting, and an experience of races. Added to this, he was an infatuated believer in the well-known doubling martingale. Practising on the credulity and ignorance of Philip, he unfolded the secrets of this wonderful system of winning fabulous sums, as his — the MacIntyre's — whole and sole discovery and property. And he represented to that willing ear that, if he only had the means of working it out, the Fuggers in the past, and the Rothschilds in the present, might be regarded as poor men compared with the *cidevant* pedagogue.

"Eh, my dear young friend, it's just the mighty lever that can make us meellionaires, an ye'll only believe it."

And there was evidence forthcoming to support the assertion. Racing calendars for twenty years were referred to; piles of paper scribbled over, and two or three lead-pencils consumed over these calculations. The system stood the test of all these years; generations of horses passed away as Phil and his mentor tested the lever's strength, and no run of luck was ill enough to break it. Philip believed in it, — as, after such an array of evidence, who would not? — but he doubted MacIntyre.

"And do you mean to say you found this out yourself?" he often asked.

And without either blush or smile, the old vagabond declared that he was the great discoverer, and accordingly rolled a Newtonian and Copernican eye on Philip, and gave himself the airs of the Spaniard holding in his hand the key of the Incas' gold, or of Raleigh with El Dorado in full view.

1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512.

These figures were MacIntyre's ladder of fortune; and he offered boundless wealth to needy Philip Durnford, on the modest condition of "standing in." He had confided his great secret to him, and he trusted to his honor.

His pupil was convinced and fascinated. Could the favorite lose ten times in succession? MacIntyre said no. Could a tipster be out ten times running? MacIntyre said no. Could Philip's own selection

be wrong ten times? MacIntyre said no. Could any mortal thing happen ten times? Mr. MacIntyre's calculations were there to give it the lie.

So they worked away at the books, going carefully through the results of thousands of races. They applied their lever to betting on billiards, boats, guns, cards, dice, — any thing that a wager can be made about; and nothing could happen in the ordinary course of things to beat them.

Philip rejoiced; for he held power and houses and wealth in his hand. He was the lucky possessor of the certain method of making a colossal fortune. He could break the ring, the banks, the world of gamblers. He did not envy his richer brother now, nor any man. He only pined at the little delay that kept him from beginning. His brother was the slowest fellow in the world.

"The mighty lever that can make us millionnaires" — he held it in his hand; and the fulcrum was the Newmarket July Meeting, two weeks hence. He began to spend his great wealth. He dreamed long day dreams. He was rich, famous, generous, too, to poor Arthur, with only three or four thousands to spend in good years. He made up the deficit in bad ones. Arthur was a brother, after all, and could draw on him for what he liked. Laura, his wife, — no princess of Russia had such jewels. His four-in-hand was the admiration of the park. His horses were always first. If they cost their weight in gold, what did it matter? He could pay it. He won the Derby. The most splendid prince in Europe came into his box to drink champagne-cup with him, and congratulate him on his success. He bought vast estates, — the envy of the envied, — Mr. Durnford the millionaire! He had his troubles too. He distressed himself when he had bought all the land in the market, — in parcels large enough to be worth having. He had no devise schemes for keeping his secret from the ring, or betting would be over. He could not get on all the money he wanted. His friends quarrelled about his wealth. People watched him in the ring, — followed his lead, — mobbed him.

Châteaux in Spain, and castles in the air beyond all power of description, he built on MacIntyre's ingenious multiplication-table.

But in all his unbounded belief in the doubling martingale there lurked a doubt. He never could credit Mr. MacIntyre's statement that he was the inventor, though that canny gentleman stuck to his lie with characteristic hardihood. If he had been

disposed to tell the truth, he might have mentioned that he got it from a groom at Melbourne, who in turn had got it from a little shilling "Guide to the Winning Post," which had been read no doubt by hundreds of people who had a shilling to lay out. The author of the pamphlet, again, was indebted to somebody before him; and so on, *ad infinitum*. But the curious part of it was that all these persons claimed the invention of the system of doubling, and imparted their information as something of a very secret and confidential nature. In this way Philip Durnford received it from Mr. MacIntyre. He gave a solemn promise not to tell it to anybody, but to go to work as speedily as possible to make his own and his mentor's fortune.

MacIntyre had received the precious talisman as a secret. He believed that few people knew of it; that those who did must grow rich by working this most productive vein. He honestly believed in his system, and gave it to Philip as a chart to guide him over the shoals and quicksands in the sea of turf enterprise to the land of gold on the other side. He had carefully worked out — always on paper, though — every known method of winning money by gambling, he had seen generations of backers and betters go, from a late noble marquis with a capital of a quarter of a million to "Ready-money Riley" and his lucky five-pound note. Before Mr. MacIntyre's eyes, all had gone the same way. It was only a question of time. Their ruin the philosopher attributed to want of system; and, among all the systems, his own was the best. He had waded through all the "Racing Calendars" from 1773 to date, had applied his system to every race for a period of ninety odd years, and on paper he had never broken down, and was the winner of many millions. He showed his figures to Philip, and completely satisfied him. But Philip, being a genius, went to work to improve it; and he tried, on paper, all sorts of little modifications of his secret method of breaking the ring. Not to go into petty details, he broke the ring in half a dozen different ways, and became Cæsus six times over. The leaves of his pocket-books were scribbled over with a thousand repetitions and combinations of the same series of figures; and he argued with himself that he was not going to gamble, — it was merely speculation.

"The mathematician, Dr. Morgan," said Mr. MacIntyre, "remarks that a gambler ceases to be such when he makes his stakes bear a proportion to his capital, and takes no hazards that are unduly against him."

And Philip Durnford's capital left him a

large reserve, over and above his working money, for contingencies that might arise. So he started with a light heart on his course of speculation. For a few days all went well. A fortnight brought a change, and showed him that paper and practice are two mightily different things, and that his system could not be worked out, if he had had the pluck to do it. Half his money was gone in following his system. The other half was punted away in indiscriminate wagering on any tip that might turn up trumps.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHACUN à son secret. Philip had his, and he kept it well. Every young fool who airs his inexperience on the turf — and, for that matter, every old one — has his own way of breaking the ring. How many of these ingenious devices are the same, fate knows, and bookmakers may guess perhaps. The infatuated themselves guard their secrets more closely than their honor; and the system, method, *modus*, martingale, — call the thing by what name you will, — is never spoken of by the lucky possessors. They are careful over each operation, for fear some inkling of their royal road to fortune should be discovered; jealous, lest, on turning over the leaves of their books, some eye, looking over their shoulder, should see their game. Once out, they think, the mischief is done. Everybody will do as they do; winning will be a certainty; and in a trice there will be no ring for them to break. The motive is selfish, but easily understood: for is not the world we live in selfish, and the least disinterested corner of it a betting-ring? Granted a system that makes winning certain, and that it is generally known, and there is the end of betting; and with it your own particular chance of becoming richer than the Rothschilds. No wonder, then, that when you have the magic talisman in your pocket, you keep it there, jealously buttoned up. That thousands of men have carried such a talisman for turning all they touched to gold, that thousands of men have reduced winning on the turf to a certainty, — on paper, — are matters of common knowledge. That theory is one thing, and practice another, — in a word, that the systems do not work to the satisfaction of the owners, it is sufficient to call attention to the fact that there are as few Rothschilds among us as of old; or to the pockets of the greasy ring-men, still stuffed as full as ever with Bank of England notes. The common fate of methods based on paper

calculations had befallen the martingale which Mr. Philip Durnford had hugged to his heart for half a season. Owing its existence, as Philip believed, to the original intellect of Mr. MacIntyre, modified and perfected by his own hand, he felt as certain of the great results to be obtained from working it out as he did that the bank would change its notes for gold on demand. With his hat jauntily set on his head, a flower in his coat, and the blue satin note-case Laura had quilted for him with her fair fingers, in his pocket, crammed with bank-notes, he had paid his guinea, and plunged proudly and defiantly into the babel of the ring at the Newmarket July.

Here he was, at the beginning of November, driving down to Kingdon races in a Hansom : alone with his thoughts, which were far from pleasant, with his betting-book to remind him of past mistakes and misfortunes, and all the money he had in the world in the inside pocket of his waistcoat, — that pocket which was to be found in all his waistcoats, secret and secure, in which he had meant to carry away the spoils he wrested from the ring.

Down on his luck, and as nearly desperate as a gambler can be who has one throw left, there was this chance for him still, — the two hundred pounds he had about him — one month of racing. In that month, with luck, he might turn the two hundred into thousands. Without luck, — well, it hardly mattered.

The method had long since been cast aside. He made his bets now without reference to it. He had followed the phantom chance through seven losing weeks. They had ruined him. There is nothing demoralizes the gambler like a long tide of ill-luck. His judgment leaves him. He can no longer thread the mazes of public form, or make clever guesses at the effect of weight in handicaps. He makes this wager and that, for no reason but that a feather turns the scale. In his mind, the strongest reason why a horse should lose is that it carries his money. He never backs the right tip ; and the only consolation he has is to quarrel with luck, and call it hard names. These had been Philip Durnford's experiences of the "glorious uncertainty of the turf" for seven miserable weeks of the worst season for backers the oldest turfite could remember. Undreamt-of outsiders were always coming in first, till the very ring-men avowed that they were tired of winning. The slaughter had been great, and complaints of default were loud and deep. Doncaster had punished some, the first and second weeks at Newmarket had settled others. This noble lord's and that honorable gentleman's

accounts were absent from Tattersall's on settling-day. Backers could not stand against such luck, it was said in excuse. There was a pretty general stampede for the Levant among the shaky division. But Philip's little account had always been forthcoming till after the Newmarket Houghton. He had taken his shovel, and dug away manfully at his little heap of sovereigns, and paid his debts every week to time ; but that last week in Cambridgeshire was a facer. It had settled him. When he added up his book after the first day of the meeting, he knew he had wagered and lost more than he could pay if he sold the coat off his back. Then he smiled the bitter smile of defeat, and, in the language of the sport, "went for the gloves" — that is, he had five days' good hard gambling, well knowing that if the result of the week's work was against him he could not settle. So, being desperate, he was foolish, and betted in amounts three times heavier than he was in the habit of doing.

"Ma boy, take ma word, the captain'sh going for the glovesh," said a discreet Hebrew, placing his dirty jewelled paw on the shoulder of another of his tribe. "I don't bet no more with him. I'm full agen any think at all."

"Vy, Nathan, vy? Misther Vilkins settled for him all right last week."

"I'll tell you vy, Jacob, ma boy. Ven I see a young feller as always used to be satisfied vith havin' a pony or fifty on the favorite for a sellin' race a bettin' in hundreds all of a sudden, I know vat it means. Look, there's Nosey Smith a layin' him two centuries agen Bella. Not for me, that's all. Mark me, now, he'll go. And nobody knows nothink about him. I've looked in the peerage : there isn't no Durnford in it as I can find. They'll book any think to anybody now, bless me if they von't! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who'll back any think? Any pricesh agen some o' these runners! Full, Capt. Durnford, sir, agen all the fav'rits."

For Philip had not done with Bella yet, and asked her price of Mr. Nathan Morris, diamond merchant, of Bishopsgate-street Without, money-lender and leg in any part of the world he might happen to be in.

And Mr. Morris was right. Philip was betting all to nothing, for if he lost he would not pay ; and he laughed as he pencilled down the name of Bella till two openings of his book were filled with it. Then there was the fun of watching the race, and seeing Bella struggle past the post.

"Of course," thought Philip ; "beaten by a head just on the post, by what I always thought was the worst animal in training."

Then he rode off to while away a few minutes with luncheon, — partridge pie, washed down with champagne — coming into the ring again with a smile on his face, and filling more pages of his book with the name of another loser.

He had no money, but he had credit; and credit is a very wonderful thing. It is the only substitute for wealth. To borrow a quotation from Defoe, "Credit makes the soldier fight without pay, the armies march without provisions, and it makes the tradesman keep open shop without stock. The force of credit is not to be described by words. It is an impregnable fortification, either for a nation or for a single man in business, and he that has credit is invulnerable, whether he has money or no." And there is nowhere in the world where credit will do more, or where there is more of it to be had, than in the betting-ring. It enabled Philip to "keep open shop without goods" till the next settling-day.

That day came, and Mr. Durnford's account was absent from the clubs. His name was mentioned pretty often in the course of that Monday afternoon. He was wanted very badly. Then people began to wonder who he was, what he was, why they had booked bets to him. Well they might wonder. This tendency to trust every man who has paid ready money with his bets for one month at most is one of the most remarkable things about the professional layer. Very often he does not know the address of his debtor, or even that the name he bets in is the one he commonly makes use of. The layer must pay every week, or his living is gone. The profession is propped up by this solitary kind of honesty. The book-maker always pays; but the backer may retire at any moment, as Philip did after going for his gloves without getting them.

The ring-men used some very bad language when the next Monday after his default came, and there was no news of him. Nobody had seen him "about" that week either. One little man had drawn a fiver of him in the street, having met him casually in Chancery Lane. This speculator took a hopeful view of things, and thought all would be right. You see, he was out of the mire. The others swore, and said they should be careful in future whom they trusted, &c.; but they had often said so before, and it only wanted a young adventurer to pay up regularly for three or four weeks, to be able to do with them exactly what Philip Durnford had done.

When the fatal week was over, and he came to reckon up the cost of his recklessness, he wished he had never done it; but it was too late. He was neither more nor less than a welsher. So men would say, he

knew. And he had still left some of the feelings of a man of honor. So, for a day or two, he shut himself up at home, — moody, very irritable, and very wretched, but safe. He blessed his stars that only one of the pack of ravening wolves knew his private address. If he had had the means he would have paid that man, under promise that he would not tell his whereabouts to the rest.

When, after a day or two had passed, he ventured out, he expected every moment to be stopped, or to meet some emissary from the ring, — to be insulted, jeered, hooted at, as a thief and a welsher. But he was safe enough: the ring-men were plying their busy trade a hundred miles from where he stood. So he got over his fear, and showed his face pretty much as of old. Then came the chance of retrieving all. Kingdon clashed with a popular Midland meeting. Not three of the bigger men who wanted him would be there. He would go, but keep out of the ring, and bet in ready money. They could not stop him from doing that; and he had been very lucky at Kingdon in the summer.

His hansom drove along the muddy road at a good speed, for he had covenanted to pay the driver "racing-price" for the day's job. They passed the last straggling rows of suburban houses, and got into the open country of the "way down Harrow-way," halting at all the recognized hostilities on the road. "Half-way houses," the driver called them, where he could just rinse the horse's mouth, and — what was equally necessary — his own. Philip drew his Dutch courage from a private fountain of inspiration in his breast pocket. An unpleasant fear of recognition kept him in his seat; but the honest cabman spent his fare's small silver for the good of the house at every port they put in at. And it is almost superfluous to add they touched at all they passed, or that to the sturdy sons of Britain this is more than half the pleasure of a day in the country. As Philip furtively peeped out through the oval side windows of his cab, he saw nothing to alarm him. He was recognized, too, by a few friends, and by some of the small fry of the professionals. These people, it was plain, had not heard of his little mishap. It gave him courage to go into the ring when he got to the course. He paid his six shillings at the gate, not with the air of the expatriated wretch he was, but more like his former self, — the loving patron of a noble sport. He was early in the field. The ring was thin. He mounted the wooden steps of the Grand Stand, and hid himself safely away in the farthest corner of the top shelf. From this eminence he watched and waited, drank

in the undulating landscape with his gaze, or scanned the faces of the ring below through his glass. The clearing-bell sounded; the numbers of the runners were hoisted on the board,—he ticked them off on his card; the riders' names were added to the numbers; the saddling-bell rang; the horses streamed out of the enclosure; the roar of the odds began in the ring down below. He pricked his ears, as the war-horse at the smell of powder, or the veteran hunter at the tongue of hounds, and forgot his luck as he strained his ear to catch, in the roar of the Babel, a notion of what it was they were making favorite, and how the market was going.

"How do they bet?" he asked, as one after another pushed up the steps to where he stood.

He was satisfied the worst favorite could win at the weights, if it was only trying. To assure himself of this, he edged and dodged his way through the ring out to the lists. Not a hungry creditor to be seen: only the small scoundrels who infest the metropolitan gatherings were assisting at Kingdon. The big rascals were away, a hundred and twenty miles off, in the Midlands.

He had begun to feel safe, and confident in his judgment, when he saw some well-known sharps putting down the money in small sums at the lists on his own selection.

"She'll win," he said, with an excited chuckle, as he pressed forward in the crowd with as springy a step as the mud round the boxes permitted.

"Good goods—the old mare is," he heard an ex-champion of England whisper in the ear of a sporting publican.

"Going straight?" inquired the confident, putting his dirty hand before his greasy mouth. "Party got the pieces on?"

"Hold yer jaw. 'Er 'ead's loose—that's enough for you; be quick and back her, before it's blown on."

Philip profited by what he had overheard, rushed to the nearest list, wrenched a crumpled fiver from his inside pocket, and reached up to the man in the box.

"Corinthian Sal!"

The fist of the burly ruffian seized his note, squeezed it up and shoved it into his bag, calling to his clerk behind—

"Fifty to five—Corinthian Sal."

"Right!"

"Here's your ticket."

Philip took it, and in trying to get away from the list-man's stand he was met by a hurrying crowd. There was a rush from the ring to back the good thing, outside; but the men who wanted to do it were well known. In an instant the pencil was run through the "10" before the name of Cor-

inthian Sal on all the lists in the gambling thoroughfare.

In vain the excited regiment from the ring plunged through the mud and mire, proffering their money to the list-keepers. They were answered everywhere, "Done with." The secret was out. The little Selling Plate was squared for the seven-year-old daughter of Corinthian Tom.

"Another ramp! And I've just laid fifty to five agen her," groaned the man Philip had bet with.

"Ain't they hot on these selling-races?"

"He's a hot member as I've laid it to. These swells don't come outside unless they know something."

When Philip managed to get back to his old stand, he met with a friend or two who wanted to hear "what he had done," and whether he "knew any thing;" and he had the pleasure of telling them he was "in the know," appearing to be much wiser than he really was, and letting them think he had backed the mare for a good stake.

When he saw her canter past the post, hands down, an easy winner, he inwardly cursed his luck at having won when, comparatively speaking, he had "nothing on."

"Just my luck," he said, as he pocketed the fifty-five pounds he had drawn; "but let us hope it has taken a turn."

He patronized the refreshment booth, drinking some champagne with his friends; and then turned his attention to the next event, reduced to a match, as only two of the seven horses entered came to the post. The talent were some time in making a favorite. It was even betting between the two weedy screws that cantered down to the starting-post. Philip, thinking it prudent to keep for the present out of the ring, for fear of any little *contrétemps* that might arise from meeting somebody who wanted him, went out to the lists, and at last betted the fifty pounds he had won, in several small bets, posting the money. He backed the favorite, laying fifty to forty on it,—and lost.

Is it necessary that I should ask my reader to follow the fortunes of Philip through the two days' racing at Kingdon? To him who is initiated in the mysteries of the turf my narrative will be intelligible, but probably uninteresting, for it is a tale he knows by heart. To the uninitiated this chapter must be to a great extent unintelligible, therefore uninteresting; but the exigencies of my history—as will be seen from what is to follow—seem to demand that I should give a brief outline of Philip Durnford's doings on this last appearance of his in the charmed circle devoted to the interests of dishonesty and dirt. Apologizing, let me comply with the necessity,

offering only, as some sort of excuse, the plea that I draw from the life.

After losing the fifty pounds he had won, Philip had still his little capital in his pocket intact. Three succeeding races relieved him of three-fourths of it.

"What forsaken luck!" he laughed bitterly, being desperate. "Fifty left! One more flutter, I suppose, and then" —

"Halloo, old Durnford!" a friendly voice sounded in his ear. "Well, how are they using you, old man, — eh? I have just landed again."

"I should say I had the Devil's own luck," replied Philip, "except for the curious fact that fellows say that indiscriminately of the best luck and the worst."

"Well, we'll say you have the Devil's worst luck, then."

They chatted till the numbers of the next race were run up.

"The good thing of the day," cried Philip's friend. "I know three or four of the clever division that have come down on purpose to back this. It was backed down to level money this morning in town."

"We shall get no price about it," said Philip.

"I'll see what they offer. Shall I do any thing for you?"

Philip hesitated — only for a moment.

"Yes."

"I'm going to put the money down upon it, I can tell you."

"Put on a century for me."

Then he stole out to the lists, and emptied his pockets. The odds he took against Triumpher were six to four. With the hundred his friend had put on by this time, he stood to win nearly two hundred pounds. With a beating heart he made for his place of vantage on the top of the wooden steps. As he ran in at the ring-gate he was stopped by a man who had often seen him bet, but with whom he had had no dealings before.

"What do you want to do, Capt. Durnford? Let me have a bet with you this time — come."

"Triumpher?" said Philip, raising his eyebrows in a careless way, and chewing the end of his pencil.

"Fifty to forty, sir."

"No." And he made a move to go on, feeling sure the odds would be extended.

"Sixty to forty, sir?"

"Not good enough."

"Here, I won't be be't by you," cried another ring-man. "I'll lay the gentleman eighty-five to seventy."

"All right," said Philip.

"Twice, sir?"

"Twice."

As he asked the man's name and wrote it down in his book, there was a general

hoarse laugh among the book-makers, for they saw intuitively what he had failed to see — namely, that he had refused six to four and taken a fraction over four to three and a half; but the laugh, when Philip had left them, was turned in quite the opposite direction, when an acquaintance called out to the man who had done the clever trick: —

"So help me, you've gone and done it, you have!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the lawyer.

"The cap'n ain't paid for a fortn't. Now!" The "Ha, ha!" now became "Oh-h, oh-h!"

"I'll off the bet. Where is he?"

But Philip had altered his mind, and was gone right away across the running track to the other side, opposite the stand. He was sitting out, dangling his legs over the white railing, and looking at his muddy boots. Oh, the exquisite pleasure of seeing the flag drop, the runners go down into the dip, come sweeping up the hill!

Ruined or made! His heart sank.

Curse the boy! why does he not bring the horse out of the ruck? He's shut in."

Hope at zero. Ruined.

"No, by Jove, he's got him out!" He's done it! Hur-ray-y-y!"

Up went his hat, high in the air.

"Triumpher!"

Yes, the judge sends up "No. 21," and Phil drove home nearly happy, with a mind full of resolutions to win on the morrow.

Wednesday morning broke in happy uncertainty as to whether to be wet or fine; but by twelve o'clock in the day the rain fell fast. But nothing short of the crack of doom — hard frost excepted — will stop a race-meeting. All the difference the weather apparently made to Philip was that, instead of spending two sovereigns in going down by road, he spent two shillings in going to Kingdon by rail. Wrapped in his mackintosh from head to foot, he felt in better heart than on the day before; and all went on well till he was recognized on the road, and insulted, by one of his forty-seven creditors for debts of honor.

"Well, what will you do?" asked Philip angrily.

"You show your face in the ring, and you'll see what I'll do. Call yourself a gentleman? I call you a welsher."

He shouted the last word; and, as there were a lot of people about, Philip rushed for a fly, and swore at the man for not driving on in a moment. He did not pay for admission to the ring. He knew the man would keep his word, so he played the undignified part of an outsider, and was, besides, in constant dread of being hooted by his enemy. There is no charge easier to

bring, or more difficult to rebut, than the charge of "welshing," on a race-course; and the mob has a nasty habit of hunting the victim, half-naked, into the nearest pond, and hearing the evidence some other day. This unpleasant practice made the young man careful whom he met. Altogether things were unpleasant. There were seven races on the wet card. They were run in a pouring rain. There was no trusting to form, for the horses could not act in the wet, and all calculations were upset. Of the first four races on the card, Philip won two and lost two. Then he sat out and looked on once without a bet, — sad, weary, and dripping.

On his fancy for the last two races he staked all the money he had in the world — and lost it.

"Well, old fellow," said an acquaintance whom he met on the platform at King's Cross, seizing him by the shoulders, and giving him a friendly shake, "if you've been backing horses in red mud you've come off a winner, and no mistake: you've got plenty of it sticking about you. What a day it has been!"

Philip muttered, "Damnable," in an undertone, and, getting a cab, directed the man to drive him home. As they left the station-yard, he put his hands into his pocket, and pulled out the only coins he had left: they were just enough to pay his fare.

CHAPTER XXV.

SOME of my readers — I am writing for both worlds — have very likely been hanged. They will remember, that, on the morning of the day for which this unpleasant operation — surrounded by every thing most likely to increase the unavoidable discomfort — was fixed, they slept sweetly and soundly, awaking early in the morning with dreams of childhood's innocence. This was the case with Philip on the morning after all this disaster had fallen upon him. He woke at twelve from a dream of perfect peace and happiness — awoke smiling and at rest. Suddenly the thought of all his misery fell upon him, and he started up, wide awake, and wretched. He could not lie any longer but got up, dressing hurriedly and nervously. All, every thing, gone: more than all. Dishonour before him, and ruin already upon him. In this evil plight, what to do? He thought of Arthur; but he could not bear to go and tell him, his younger brother, the story of his ruin. And then he looked back, and saw with what fatal folly he had gone

deeper and deeper, hoping against hope, living in the fool's paradise of a gambler.

He went down stairs, and found Laura, fresh and bright, reading quietly in the window. She looked up, rang the bell, and sat down again. No word of welcome for him, none of reproach; for, as her husband grew colder, the young wife retreated more and more within herself. Laura's face has changed in the last three months. The old look has passed away, and another has taken its place. It is a sad expression, an expression of thought and reflection, that sits upon her face. She has found out her great and terrible fault. Between herself and Philip there is nothing in common; and she trembles, thinking of the future that lies before, and a life spent as these last three months have been. For she has no friends, no visitors, no acquaintance. No one but Philip and Mr. MacIntyre ever speaks to her. She is alone in the world; and yet she knows, in her heart, that there is one friend to whom she may go, with whom she will find forgiveness. Of that she is certain. Philip's breakfast was brought up. He sat down, exasperated with himself, with his wife because she took no notice of him, with every thing. He poured out a cup of tea, and looked at it. Then he broke into a fit of irrepressible wrath.

"Damn it all!" he said, "the tea is cold." His wife looked at him in surprise. It was the first time he had ever lost his temper before her.

"Philip! Why, it is just made."

To prove his words, he tasted it, and scalded his lips. Then he pushed the tray back, swearing again. Laura watched him with astonishment.

"I will have no tea and trash. Give me some brandy."

"Not in the morning. Philip, you are very strange. Are you ill?"

He went to the cellaret, and helped himself, saying nothing.

Just then the maid came, bearing a small blue paper, — a missive from the butcher.

"Philip, give me four pounds, please. The man wants his money."

"I have no money."

"Mary, tell the butcher to call again tomorrow," Laura said, flushing with shame.

"What is the meaning of this, Philip?"

"Nothing. If there were, you would not care, you would not understand. Do you care any thing at all for what concerns me? Have you ever cared?"

"At least, I may know if it is any thing in which I can help."

"You cannot help. You can only make things worse. If you loved me, you might; but, there, what is the use of talking?"

She was looking quite coldly in his face.

Love? — of course she had never loved him; but why — why did not conscience, who so often slumbers when she ought to be awake and at work — why did not conscience remind him then, even then, of all the girl had given to him, and all of which he had robbed her? He might have remembered her sweet and innocent trust; the confidence which came from perfect purity of soul; the nights when he had awakened, her head upon his breast, his arms round her neck, to listen to her sweet breath rise and fall, to catch the murmur of her dreams; and, for very shame's sake, he might have thought of the friend from whom he had torn her, — the disgraceful lies and deceits with which he had surrounded her. But he thought of none of these things; he thought only, that, at all risks and hazards, this, at least, must be put an end to.

"What is it, Philip?" she asked, with frightened eyes.

"I have been thinking," he said, looking on the carpet, and lighting a cigar with trembling fingers, "for some time, that we should come to an understanding."

"What about?"

"About every thing, — our marriage especially."

I believe, that, when he got up that morning, nothing was farther from his thoughts than this villany: but a drowning man catches at a straw; and the ruined man saw, that, by getting rid of Laura, he should at least be free to act. The power of impetuosity to make men do vile and abominable things has never been properly stated by poet or novelist. In the Lord's Prayer, after the petitions for bread and forgiveness, comes the equally important one that we may not be led into temptation — amongst other things, by an empty purse.

Laura suspected nothing, understood nothing.

"I told you two months ago, Laura, that perhaps you might, some time or other, make another attempt to recover Mr. Venn's friendship. I think the time has come."

"I may write to him, Philip? You mean it? — you really mean it?"

"I think I would not write to him, if I were you, because you might mislead him on one or two important points. I think you had better go, and see him."

"Mislead him? How am I to mislead him?"

He looked up, and met the clear, deep eyes of his wife; and his own fell. His voice grew husky.

"When you met me — that is, when I took you to the lodgings of the man in Keppel Street" —

"Where we were married?"

"Where, Laura, — there is no use in hiding things any longer, — where the man pretended to marry us."

She looked full at him, unable to take in, all at once, the whole force of his words.

Philip, the fatal shot once fired, felt emboldened to proceed; but he was very pale.

"MacIntyre was not a properly qualified clergyman. He had no power to marry us. He says he is a clergyman of the Scotch Church. If that is any consolation to you, believe it. The man is an accomplished liar; but he may sometimes speak the truth. We are no more married, Laura, than if we had never met."

"You knew this all along, Mr. Durnford?"

"All along. I should have married you regularly, because I was so infatuated with your beauty; but you insisted on being married on that particular Wednesday or no other. It was not altogether my fault. I thought perhaps" —

"Yes," said Laura, sitting down.

Neither spoke for a space. The cigar went out between Philip's lips, and these trembled and shook. His face was white, with a look of terror: a man might have it when he suddenly realizes that all the nobleness has gone out of him.

Presently he moved forward a step. She started back, crying, —

"Don't touch me — don't come near me!"

"Laura, in spite of your coldness, — though you have never loved me as I once loved you, — I should have kept this secret but for one thing. I am utterly ruined. I not only have no money, but I owe hundreds of pounds more than I can pay; and I shall be a dishonored man. I must leave the country, if I cannot raise the money. We must part."

"Yes," said the girl, "we must part. Why did we ever meet? By what cruel mockery of fate did you ever cross my path? Part! Man, if you were to touch me, if I were to feel your breath upon me, I should die. You, who for five months have lived with this shameful lie upon your conscience — you who call yourself gentleman — you who mocked at the poor man's sins and sufferings — you! Is every gentleman like this?"

He did not answer, looking down upon the hearth-rug. There were, then, some remains of shame upon him.

Laura poured out a glass of water, and drank it. Then she took off her wedding-ring, kissed it, and laid it gently on the table.

"Holy symbol," she said, "I must not

wear you any longer. Why did you find me out to ruin me, Mr. Philip Durnford? Are there not enough poor women crying in the world, but you must bring sorrow and shame to another? And — and — O God! is heaven so full that there is no room in it for me?"

Then she turned upon him like a tigress, so that he shrank back, and cowered.

"You, for whom I prayed night and morning! you, that I thought all nobleness and honor; so that I laid bare all the secrets of my soul to you, and told every thing that was in my heart! I am ashamed when I think that I have so talked with you. I am more ashamed of this than of any thing. And, oh! what will Mr. Venn say when I go back to him, and tell him all the shameful story? How shall I tell it him — how shall I tell it him? Philip Durnford, keep out of his way; and tell that other man, your accomplice, to keep out of his way, and hide himself, or it may be worse for him. I don't want any punishment to fall on you — except, I suppose, God does sometimes make wicked people feel their wickedness; but nothing can make their victims again as they have been. When your turn comes, Philip, when you go from bad to worse — when you find yourself at last upon your death-bed, with *this* behind you, you will think of me, — you will think of me."

Philip was a little recovered by this time.

"Of course," he said lightly, "I expected a little unpleasantness at first. You will see, when we get older, that I could not act otherwise."

"As a gentleman — no."

"I will not be irritated," he went on, being now as calm as if he were doing a virtuous action, — "I will not be irritated. The sale of this furniture" —

"Thank you — you are thoughtful."

Then she left him, and went to her own room, where she locked the door, and threw herself upon the bed.

Philip, left alone, wiped his forehead, and breathed more freely. One source of expense was gone, at any rate. There was comfort in that thought, — a ray of sunshine in the tempest of his mind. As for what might be said or thought of him, he was profoundly indifferent. Only it occurred to him that the news might have been broken in a different manner, less abruptly, through a third person, by letter. However, it was done, and nothing could undo it. Misfortune to some men is a kind of Ithuriel's spear: it reveals the real nature of a man —

"No falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to his won likeness."

Then the brave man becomes a coward, the large-hearted man mean, the godly man ungodly, the virtuous man vicious, the noble a lache. The women of the family generally have the best opportunities of finding out the truth; but they cover it up, hide it, and go about flaunting their colors of loyalty to the great and good man whom all the world admires; and, after the first agony of shame, fall into that cynicism which sits so ill on woman's nature. As for the men, I think their thoughts may arrange themselves in the form of a collect, a prayer for every morning of the year, as thus: "Lord, the helper of sinners as well as of saints, let not the smugness of our reputation ever decrease; but replenish us, above all things, with the bulwarks of wealth and honor, so that the virtues with which we are credited may never be called into exercise." And there are some — Philip Durnford was one — who deliberately believe themselves to be chivalrous, delicately honorable, brave, manly, and great; though all the time every thought and every action might go to prove the contrary. The mirror in which men see themselves — what we call conscience — is distorted; and while the real man performs duties and absurdities in folly and sin, the mirror shows another Sir Galahad, marching with lofty crest, along the narrow path of honor, while in the sunshine glow the battlements which guard the Holy Grail.

Such was Philip in his mirror. All of a sudden, when Laura left him, there was an instant flash of lightning in his soul which showed him a thing he was never to forget, the real creature he was, — no Sir Galahad, but a mopping and mowing antic, crawling ignobly down the slope of Avernus. He started to his feet, and stood for a moment staring into space. Then he seized the brandy bottle, and drank a wine-glassful; and behold, Sir Galahad again! — only with a sort of blurr and haze around his noble form, evermore to grow more blurred as the memory of this guilt eats into his soul. Perhaps this illusory image will some day be wholly gone, and his real self be seen with clearer eyes. Then may he cry aloud to be delivered from the body of this death, and God's punishment be upon him — the punishment of forgiveness. Is there no punishment in repentance and self-abasement? Cannot revenge itself be satisfied when the sinner is prostrate, crying, from shame and remorse, "Lord, I have sinned — I have sinned"?

Laura, in her bedroom, sat silent for a while, trying to think. Then she fell upon her knees, and tried to pray; but no words came. Only as she knelt a thought came

across her soul, which was, perhaps, the answer to her prayer. For she arose swiftly, and began to undress herself. Every thing she had on she tore off, and threw from her, as if it had been a shirt of Nessus. Her earrings, her jewels, the cross around her neck, she laid on the table, and put with them her watch and chain, all her little trinkets,—all but a single little cross with a black ribbon, which she laid aside, for Mr. Venn had given it to her. And then she opened all her drawers, took out the contents,—the trousseau that Philip had given to her,—piled them all in a heap, and trampled on them with her bare little feet. And then, out of the lowest division, she took the dress she had worn when she was married: all that she had on that day was lying folded together, even to the stockings and the little boots. She put them on hurriedly: the dress of blue merino stuff; the little hat with an ostrich feather, Mr. Venn's last gift; the ivory cross and the locket he had given her; the brown cloth jacket, the belt with the great steel buckle, and the new pair of gloves,—the last she had received from him. In the pocket of her dress was her purse, and in it two pounds,—Mr. Venn's two pounds.

Then she took her jewel-case, placed in it all the things that Philip had given her, and descended the stairs. He was sitting there, just as she had left him half an hour before,—her handsome husband, her knight, and lord, and king! He for whom she had left the noblest of friends, to cleave to him. All the nobleness was gone out of his face. As she looked on him, she wondered where it had been; and she pitied him—yes, she pitied him—for his baseness.

He looked up, and made a motion with his lips as if he would speak; but no words came. She placed the jewel-case on the table gently.

"You will find my dresses up stairs, Mr. Durnford. You can sell them for something, I dare say. I am come to return you your other presents. There is the watch you gave me at Vieuxcamp, with a pretty speech about its lasting as long as your love: you remember it, I dare say. Here is the chain. You said that love's fetters were all golden. It was a very pretty thing to say, was it not? Here are the bracelets, and all the rest. They will do for your next victim.

"After the next mock marriage, try to undeceive the victim a little less suddenly and harshly. Let her know it in some way a little different to this.

"I wish you had died first, Philip. I wish you were lying dead at my feet, and that I were crying over your dead body,

believing you to be good and true. Now there is nothing to lament; but how much worse for both of us! The last memory I shall carry away with me is of a coward and a liar. A gentleman! Look in the glass, at your own face."

It was now, though she did not know this, the face of a negro, with protruding lips, lowering eyebrows, and black cheeks.

"Have you more to say?" asked Philip hoarsely.

"I go as I came," she said. "Whatever I brought with me I take away, but nothing more. Stay, this is my own pen-knife."

She took a little white-handled thing from the inkstand, and put it into her pocket. It was the slightest action in the world, but it wrung Philip's heart as nothing yet had wrung it.

"Now there is nothing left to remind you of me," she said. "Mr. Venn will help me. I go back to him."

He did not speak.

"Farewell, Philip."

She turned to go. As she touched the handle of the door, her husband fell forward on his knees before her, and caught her by the hand, with tears and sobs.

"Laura, Laura," he cried, "forgive me! All shall be as it was. We will be married again. Forgive me, Laura. I am mad this morning. Only stay"—

But she slipped from him, and was gone.

After all, the memory of her husband was not altogether that of the hardened wretch she might have thought him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ABOUT two o'clock, Mr. MacIntyre called upon his patron, and found him in a state of mental irritation which indicated the necessity of prudence and tact. He was sitting where Laura had left him, glowering over the fire,—her bracelets and trinkets on the table; and the black cloud upon his face, with this disorder, was quite sufficient to teach the student of human nature that something had happened. A curious phrase this, if we may be allowed a digression. It surely indicates a strong belief in the malignity of fate, when the phrase, "something has happened" means misfortune; as if nothing was ever given unexpectedly except kicks and buffets. So far as my own experience goes, the voice of the people is right.

Mr. MacIntyre assumed an expression, designed to illustrate the profound sympathy working in his breast, took off his hat, and sat down in silence.

"What is the matter, Phil?" After a pause.

Philip made an impatient gesture.

"Mrs. Darnford" —

"Damnation!" cried Philip, starting to his feet, and walking backwards and forwards.

Mr. MacIntyre was silent. Presently, preserving the same sympathetic look, he rose, and, moving softly, — after the manner of one who respects trouble, — he proceeded to the well-known cellaret, whence he drew a decanter of sherry. Helping himself to a glass, he drank it off with a deep sigh. Then he shook his head solemnly, and offered the decanter to Philip.

"Drink!" he cried. "It is all you think of. Is there a misfortune in the world that you would not try to cure with drink?"

"None," said MacIntyre: "I think there is none. Drink makes a man forget every thing. But what is it, Philip? What has happened?"

"Why have you not been near me for a week?"

"Because I have been busy about my own affairs. What has happened, then?"

"I have been losing about as fast as a man could lose, for seven or eight weeks" —

"Eh, man! luck will" —

"I have no luck but the Devil's, I suppose. Listen: you blew the spark into a flame, — you and your wonderful secret were at the beginning of it. 'The mighty lever that can make us meellionnaires.' You recollect?"

"I can't but say I do."

"Well, the lever's broke into little bits, that's all. I owe more hundreds than I can tell you over what I can pay. I have not bothered to add up the sum total of the book over the Houghton meeting. I can tell you this, though: before Kingdon, I had forty-seven creditors; now, I suppose, I've got three or four more. They'd like to meet me, I have not the least doubt. They won't. I'm scratched for all my engagements. Broken down badly. It is not one leg in my case, it's all four."

He laughed. His mind was easier since the anxiety of how he should find the money to pay with had been removed. He had decided not to pay; been desperate, and gambled without much hope of paying; come off second-best at the game, and had not paid. His desperation had brought some sort of relief with it. Only the reckless man can laugh as he did. Mr. MacIntyre, now many degrees removed from the feeling of recklessness, saw no cause for making merry, and opened his eyes as wide as it was possible to do, put-

ting on his most sympathizing mask, at the same time that he ejaculated a pious, "Hear that, now!" as his young friend's narrative proceeded.

"See there," Philip continued, tossing his betting-book across the table to Mr. MacIntyre, "turn over the pages, and satisfy yourself. There is a line scored through the wins. You won't find many. I backed fifteen horses in the last two days at Newmarket without scoring one win."

"I doubt," said Mr. MacIntyre, shaking his head, and handing back the book, "I doubt you did not keep to the seestem. Ah, now" —

"I did not. Nobody ever did keep to a system. They mean to at the start; but they forget they even meant till they come to add up a losing account. I thought when you saw what a succession of facers backers have had, you would have guessed what was the matter."

Here he picked up a newspaper a week old, and read, "The complaints of absent accounts were loud and deep, and no wonder. Even bookmakers don't like to be shot at; and two noble lords, besides a baker's dozen of 'untitled noblemen,' have gone in the last few weeks."

"'Untitled noblemen,' MacIntyre. that's for me. After that awful Monday came, I was frightened at my own shadow for a few days, and hardly dared to look into the paper of a morning. I expected to find my name at the head of the sporting intelligence, or in the agony column with the people wanted. They don't do that, I find; but one fellow has written, after calling about twenty times at the club, to say he shall post me at Tattersall's. Much I care if he does. It will be a *poste restante*, but I am not likely to be called for."

"Ye don't know that," said MacIntyre, wisely wagging his head.

"I do," said Philip, with his bitter, scornful, hollow laugh. "All is lost, — honor, money, all. If I raked together every thing I have in the world, I don't suppose I should be able to pay a shilling in the pound. But this is not all. I've had another loss," he went on. "I told that girl the whole truth, and she has left me."

"Is she gone? I am sorry," said MacIntyre. "I've always been vera sorry for the poor little bonnie thing."

"She is gone, and will never come back to me. So that is finished. Let us talk about other things. I suppose, MacIntyre, that the marriage was all a farce?"

The reverend gentleman took two bits of paper — the famous marriage certificates — from his pocket-book, and handed them to Philip.

"The mock certificates," he said. "Yes, Philip, you can do what you like with them. Best tear them up."

Philip threw them into the fire.

"But you told me"—

"Eh, now? Don't let us have a bletherin' about what I told you. You were in one of your moral moods that day, you see; and I always suit my conversation to circumstances. I just thought it best to make the most of what we did. Perhaps I was never an ordained clergyman at all. Perhaps I pretended. I have preached though, on probation. It was at Glasgie. They said I wanted unction. Eh, sirs, what a man I might have been, with unction!"

Philip took him by the shoulders, and held him at arm's length.

"MacIntyre, you are a precious scoundrel! I am bad enough, God knows; but not so bad as you. I have the strongest desire at this moment to take you by the throat, and throttle the life out of you."

The philosopher looked up for one moment in alarm, but speedily smiled again.

"You will not, Phil. First, because it would be murder, and you would not like to be hanged. Second, because you would not be such a fool as to hurt the only man who has it in his power to help you."

"You!"

"And third, because your wrath is like a fire of chips. It burns out as soon as it is lighted."

Philip let him go.

"If you are the only man to help me, why the devil don't you, instead of drinking sherry, and telling me what a liar you are?"

"I'm going to," said the little man, sitting down with an air of great dignity, and beginning to tremble, because he was at last going to play his great card. "I'm going to. Sit down, Phil, and listen. Let us first face the position. What is it?"

"Ruin and disgrace."

"For want of a few hundreds, which I will put into your hands at once, with plenty more to the back of them."

"Go on, man. Are there any more lies at the bottom of all this?"

"Do not pain me unnecessarily, Philip. You will be sorry afterwards. This is a very grave and serious matter. Do you remember a conversation I had with you after your father's death?"

"I do."

"I hinted then at the possession of certain documents which might or might not be found useful in proving you the heir to certain property."

"Go on, MacIntyre. Do get on faster."

"I afterwards obtained those proofs.

During all the years of my wandering, I have kept them reelegiously in my pocket-book, in the hope that they might one day be of use in restoring you, my favorite pupil, to your own."

He dropped his voice from nervousness. Suppose, after all, the plan should fail? It seemed to Philip that his accents trembled with emotion.

"The papers prove you beyond a doubt—I mean, mind, beyond a legal doubt—to be the sole heir of your father's property, the estate of Fontainebleau, in the Island of Palmiste."

"Arthur's estate? I will not believe it."

"Do not, if you prefer to believe to the contrary. It brings in at present about £4,000 per annum, clear profit, in good years. There is not a mortgage on it, and it is managed by the most honest man in all the island. Philip, I offer you this, not in an illegal way, not in a way of which you will hereafter be ashamed, but as a right, your right. I offer you fortune, escape from all your troubles; and, Philip,—not the least—I offer you legitimacy."

"The proofs, MacIntyre—the proofs."

"Wait, wait. First read and sign this document. It is a secret agreement. It is not possible to receive the sum named by any legal procedure,—I trust entirely to your honor; and, if you do not obtain the estate, the agreement is not worth the paper it is written on."

Philip read it. It was a paper in which he pledged himself to hand over to MacIntyre, as soon as he got the Fontainebleau estate, the sum of £5,000.

"It will be a cruel thing to turn out Arthur," he said.

"You can settle with all your creditors," said MacIntyre significantly.

"At the worst, I can but starve," said Philip.

"Hoots toots!" said the philosopher. "I've tried it: you would not like it. Of course you will not starve. Sign the paper, and we will proceed."

Philip took a pen, signed it, and tossed it back.

MacIntyre folded the document, and carefully replaced it in his pocket-book. Then he took out three or four papers, wrapped in a waterproof cover. They were clean enough, though frayed at the edges, and the ink was yellow with age. He handed them solemnly to Philip. Three of them were letters written by George Durnford, beginning "My dearest wife," and ending with "Your most affectionate husband, George Durnford."

"Obsairve," said Mr. MacIntyre. "The

dates of all are *before* that of his marriage with Mdle. Adrienne de Rosnay. The letters themselves are not sufficient. Look at this."

It was a certificate of marriage between George Durnford and Marie —, no other name.

"And this."

The last paper purported to be a copy of a marriage register from the Roman Catholic chaplain of St. Joseph. To it was appended a statement to the effect that the marriage had been privately solemnized in Mr. Durnford's house, but that the register was duly entered in the church-book.

Philip's eyes flashed.

"If you had told me that you were yourself the Roman Catholic priest, I should not have believed you. MacIntyre, if those papers are what they pretend to be, I am a legitimate son."

"Of course you are. I've known it all along; but I waited my opportunity."

"Who are the witnesses to the marriage?" said Philip.

"See those signatures. I am one. I was present on the occasion. The other is Adolphe, brother to Marie, the bride. The clergyman is dead, and I suppose the other witness by this time. But you can inquire in Palmiste if you like. The ways of what we call Providence are obscure. They may appear to be winding. They are, in reality, straight."

Philip made an impatient gesture, and he stopped.

Mr. MacIntyre had played his last card, his King of Trumps, and it looked like winning. He breathed more easily.

"I believe, MacIntyre," said Philip coolly, "that there is not a single thing in the world that you would not do for money."

"There is not," replied the tutor with readiness. "There is nothing. And why not? I look round, and see all men engaged in the pursuit of wealth. They have but one thought, — to make money. I, too, have been possessed all my life with an ardent desire to be rich; but fortune has persecuted me. Ill-luck has dogged me in all that I have tried. I am past fifty now, and have but a few years to live. To have a large fortune would bring with it no enjoyment that I any longer greatly care for; but to have a small one would mean ease, respectability, comfort for my declining years, nurses to smooth my pillow, considerate friends. This is what I want. This is what you will give me. I have looked for it all these years, and bided my time. With my five thousand pounds, which is two hundred and fifty pounds a

year, I shall go to some quiet country place, and live in comfort. My antecedents will be unknown. I shall be respectable at last."

The prospect was too much for him, philosopher that he was. He went on, in an agitated voice, walking up and down the room, —

"Money! Is there any thing in the world that money will not procure? Is it friends? You can get them by the bribe of a dinner. Is it love? You can buy the semblance, and win the substance. Is it honor? You can buy that too, if you have got enough money. Is it power? Money is synonymous with power. Is it comfort? Only money will buy it. Is it health? You may win it back by money. Is it independence? You cannot have it without money. Money is the provider of all."

"It won't help you to get to heaven."

"I beg your pardon. Without it I am, — I am damned if you will get to heaven."

"A curiously involved expression," said Philip, looking at the man with astonishment.

"Answer me this, Phil. Did you ever hear of a poor man repenting, unless it was when he was going to be hanged?"

"I really have not given the subject any consideration."

"You never did. It is only the rich who have leisure to repent. What is a poor man to think about but the chance of to-morrow's dinner? Great heavens! Phil, when I think of how wretchedly, miserably, detestably poor my life has been, my wonder is, not that my life has been so bad, but that it has not been worse. Do you know what grinding poverty is? Do you know what it is to be a poor student at a Scotch University? Do you know what it means to take up a sacred profession which you are not fit for, — to disgrace yourself, and lose self-respect, before you are five and twenty, — to be put to a thousand shifts, — to invent a hundred dodges, — to lose your dignity as a man, — to be a parasite, and fail in that, — to take to drink because the years of your manhood are slipping by, and a miserable old age is before you? Tell me, can you guess what all these things mean? Youth! I had no youth. It was wasted in study and poverty. I dreamed of love and the graces of life. None came to me. No woman has ever loved me. Not one. I have always been too poor even to dream of love. Philip, I like you for one reason. You have kicked me like a dog. You have called me names: you despise me; but you and I are alike in this, that we owe the world a grudge. I rejoiced when I saw you ruining yourself. I stood by at the last, and

let it go on, because I knew that every hundred pounds you threw away brought me nearer to my end; and that is the five thousand pounds that you will give me."

Philip said nothing. He saw in part what this man was whom he had believed to be a simple, common rogue; saw him as he was, — pertinacious, designing, cynically unscrupulous. He recoiled before a nature stronger than his own, and felt abashed.

"The money," MacIntyre went on, "will not come a bit too soon. I am nearly at the end of the hundred pounds I had. Arthur told me I should have another fifty, and then no more. What should I do when that was gone? You remember what I was when you met me in the street? — a poor, famished creature, on one and three pence a day. A few more weeks would have finished me. Even now the effects of that bitter winter are on me; and I wake at night with the terror upon me that those days are coming back, — that I shall have to return to the twopenny breakfast, and the fourpenny dinner, and the miserable lodging where I sat at night, gloomy and drinkless. Money! He asks me if I would do any thing for money! I, with my memories! Philip, I swear there is no act of dishonesty I would not commit to save myself from this awful dread of destitution that hangs over me day and night. After my miserable life, compensation is due to me. I say, sir, it is due."

His face grew black and lowering.

"If I am not paid what is owing to me, I shall take what I can get. For the forced hypocrisies of my youth, for my servile manhood, for my ill-fortune, my wretched condition of last year, I swear that compensation is due to me. Honesty! The wise man guides himself by circumstances. Well, I've prayed — yes, you may laugh, but I have prayed till my knees were stiff — for some measure, even the smallest, of success in the world, for just a little of that material comfort which makes life tolerable. As well pray for the years to roll back as for fate to be changed. Whatever I do henceforth, I claim as my right. It is my compensation for the sufferings of the past."

He sat down. Philip noticed how shaky he was, how his legs tottered, and the perspiration stood in great beads upon his nose, — the feature where emotion generally first showed itself with this philosopher; but he answered him not a word.

"Go now," he said, "and show these papers to Arthur. He ought to see them."

MacIntyre put on his hat.

"Don't come back here," said Philip. "Find me at the club. I shall choke if I slept a night in this house."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHEN Arthur heard MacIntyre's story, he was amazed.

"Why did you not tell me all this before?" he asked at last.

"You have known it all these years, — why did you not tell it when my father died? Let me look at the letters again. They are in my father's writing. Is there some villany in this?"

"The extract from the register, ye'll ob-sairve," said the philosopher, passing over the injurious nature of the last words, "is certificated by a firm of respectable solicitors, and enclosed to me by their agents in London."

"Why not tell the story before?"

"Loard, loard! it is a suspicious world. You'll remember, Mr. Arthur, that I was once violently assaulted by your brother?"

"I remember."

"It was because I hinted at this secret; for no other reason. Therefore, as I was not personally interested in either of you getting the money, — though I certainly always received great consideration from Philip, — I held my tongue. The time has now come, when poor Phil is ruined."

"Ruined! How?"

"He has lost his money on the turf. He has now nothing. This being the case, I found it time to interfere. Here are my papers, — here my proofs. It's vera hard for you, Mr. Arthur, after so many years o' the pillow o' luxury, and ye will commence to remember some of the maxims" —

"What does Philip say?"

"He told me to bring you the things, and tell you the story."

"It seems incredible, — impossible. And yet the letters and the certificate."

"You can fight it, Mr. Arthur, if you please. You will have to put me in the box; and I shall, most reluctantly, have to represent to the world the secrets of your father's life."

Arthur recoiled in dismay.

"It is not a question of fighting. It is a question of doing what is right. If only your story is true. Pray, Mr. MacIntyre, what is the price you have put upon it?"

He smote his chest.

"Go on, Arthur, go on. You into whose young mind I poured treasures of philosophy. Insult your aged and poverty-stricken tutor, — and a Master of Arts of an ancient and" —

"You sold me an address."

"Pardon me. I borrowed forty pounds of you, and, with a kindness which I regret not to see rated at its real worth, I gave you Miss Madeleine's address. I hope you have made good use of it."

"What does it matter to you, sir, what use I have made of it?"

"Not at a', not at a': let us come back to our business. The story is not mine alone, Arthur. It rests on the evidence of the Church. Man tells lies: church registers are infallible. I suppose that Marie died in England before the second marriage" —

"Mr. MacIntyre, do you want me to wring off your neck?"

"The facts of the case, — the facts of the case only. Your elder brother, sir, received my communication without any of the manifestations of temper which you have shown. Naturally, there is a difference between you."

"You should have told us ten years ago. You should have told us even three months ago. Why did you not?"

"To begin with, I saw no reason for speaking at all, till my friend, as well as old pupil, lost his money. This was yesterday."

"And why next?"

"Because I did not choose."

This was the only outward mark of resentment at Arthur's suspicions which the sage allowed himself.

He gave a long sniff of satisfaction, and went on, —

"There may be a weakness in the evidence. The law might be evaded by a crafty counsel. You can fight the question, if you like. But the *right* of the case will remain unaltered. Arthur Durnford, you are only the second son of your father."

Arthur was silent for a while, leaning his head on his hand.

"Come into the city with me. Do you object to bring your papers to my lawyer's?"

"Not at a', not at a'. Let us go at once," answered MacIntyre, apparently in great good humor. "And don't be overmuch cast down, Arthur, at this temporary reverse of circumstances. Philip will give you enough to live upon. If not, there are several lines of life open to you. You may be a private tutor, like me. Then, indeed, my example will not have been wholly in vain."

He pursued this theme as they drove into the city in a cab, illustrating his position by reference to passages in his own life, wherein he had imitated the magnanimity of Themistocles, the clemency of Alexander, the continence of Scipio, and the generosity of Cæsar.

"Poor I may be," he said, "and certainly am: but at least I can reflect — the reflection alone is worth a bottle of *Isla* whiskey — on temptations avoided and

good effected. I forgive you, Arthur, for your hard words; and remain, as I always have been, your best friend."

Arthur answered little, and that in monosyllables. He was so much pre-occupied, that the man's prattle dropped unheeded on his ears.

What was the right thing to do.

The lawyer heard what Arthur had to say, read the documents carefully, — from time to time casting a furtive glance on MacIntyre, who sat with an air of great dignity, and even virtue, in his countenance, and occasionally rubbed his nose.

"You are the only surviving witness, Mr. MacIntyre?"

"I am," returned our Alexander. "That is, the only one, I believe, surviving. 'Flesh is grass.' The priest was younger than myself; but, you see, he is gone first. Adolphe might be found, perhaps, though I think he is dead too."

"It is now twenty-seven years since this marriage, according to your certificate, was contracted. Would you kindly tell us more about it?"

"With pleasure. It took place in Mr. Durnford's own house at Fontainebleau, in the dining-room. You remember our lessons, — those delightful lessons, — which used to take place in the dining-room, Arthur? It's vera sweet to recall old days. It was in the evening. Marie left her mistress's house in the afternoon. No one knew where she had gone except myself. I helped her to escape."

"Oh!" said the lawyer, "you acted as — as the uncle of Cressida. It was a creditable position for you to occupy."

"Perhaps," said MacIntyre, with all that was left of his power of blushing mantling to his nose, — "perhaps. The necessities of the stomach have on several occasions obliged me to take part in actions of which my conscience disapproved. The needy man has no choice. I approve the better cause, even when fate, armed with the weapon of hunger, has obliged me to follow the worse. In the words of the Latin poet, — I hope, sir, you have not entirely neglected the humanities, — '*Dum meliora probo*'" —

"My dear sir," interrupted the lawyer, "pray get on with your story."

"Marie required a good deal of persuading," he went on, gaining courage as he began to unfold his web of fiction. "Mr. Durnford, a young man at the time, had conceived a violent passion for her. She was as white as a European, and had no marks at all of her descent, except her full black hair. Her mother, indeed, was a mulatto; and perhaps her father was a white man, — I don't know. On the even-

ing when I drove her over to Fontainebleau, I had got Father O'Callinan to ride up in the afternoon. He knew what he was to do. It was promised to Marie; and there in the sitting-room, with myself and Adolphe, a half-blood brother of Marie, who was sworn to secrecy, the marriage was performed, and these papers signed. A year and a half later, after her boy was born, Marie went away to Europe, and Mr. Durnford married Mademoiselle Adrienne de Rosnay."

"And pray how did the papers come into your hands?"

MacIntyre for a moment hesitated, and a violent effusion of red mounted to his nose.

"After the death of Mr. Durnford, I went through his papers."

"As a legally appointed agent?"

"No. As a confidential friend of the family, in which I had been a tutor for many years," said MacIntyre.

"In other words, you ransacked my father's desk?" asked Arthur.

"Do not put an injurious construction on the proceeding," said MacIntyre. "I searched the drawers for some papers of my own, and found not only my own private documents, but also these letters."

"Oh!" said the lawyer. "Dear me! Would you be good enough to step outside? Stay, though, what has become of — of — Marie?"

"She went to Europe, and was lost sight of. I suppose she died."

"Thank you," said the lawyer, opening the door. "You will find the papers in the next room. Mr. Thompson, pray give this gentleman 'The Times.' Now, Mr. Durnford, this is an ugly case. Tell me what you know of this man."

Arthur told him every thing.

"He is evidently a rogue. And I believe that the whole thing is a forgery. Do you know your father's hand-writing?"

"Yes: the letters are his."

"Well, well, it may be. Still, observe that in the only place where the word Marie occurs, the writing looks to me uncertain, and the word laps over beyond the line. It may possibly have been put in afterwards. Are you sure that the dates are in the same writing as the letters?"

"They look so. Besides, there is the church register."

"Registers have been tampered with, especially in novels. But what does the man mean by it all: the secrecy for ten years, — the suddenness of the revelation? *What does he get for it?*"

"Philip, I am sure, would not pay for his secret."

"Humph! I don't know. The church register is the only thing to fear. Fight it, Mr. Durnford."

"It is not the winning or losing," Arthur replied. "That seems the least part of it."

The lawyer stared at him.

"To Philip it means legitimacy. He *must* fight."

"My dear sir, it *may* also mean legitimacy to you."

"I think not. I am *quite* sure that my father would not have married a second time, except with the clearest proof of his first wife's death. That is to me a conviction. I have nothing to fear on that ground. But there is another thing. How can I drag my father's life and character into open court?"

"Would you sacrifice every thing for the mere sake of hiding scandals five and twenty years old?"

"If they are my father's — yes."

"Well, well — let us see."

He went into the outer office, and requested permission to see the papers again, holding them up to the light to see the water-mark. Mr. MacIntyre watched him steadily, with a twinkle in his eye distinctly resembling a wink. The lawyer returned the papers, and went back.

"He's a crafty rascal, at least. The water-marks are all right. Mr. Durnford, there is villany in it. Do nothing rashly."

"Philip will press on the case. I only begin now to understand what it may mean to him — what the past has been for him. I shall not fight with my brother."

"You will acknowledge every thing?"

"No," said Arthur, straightening himself, as one who is doing a strong thing, "I shall hide every thing. I may be a coward, but I *will not* have my father's name hawked about in public, and the story of his youth — and — and — perhaps his sins, told to the whole world. Let Philip have all the money. I retire. Let Philip have all the money. I shall not starve, I dare say."

"Nonsense, nonsense. As your lawyer, I protest against it. My dear sir, the time for Quixotism has passed away. People will ask questions too. What will you say?"

"Nothing. Let them ask what they please. The secret is mine — and Philip's — and this man's. Not one of us will speak of it."

"As for Mr. MacIntyre, certainly not — provided his silence is bought. Will your brother buy it?"

"I shall not ask. I should excuse him if he did."

"Take advice, Mr. Durnford, take advice."

"I will take advice. I will put the whole facts into the hands of a third person, and be guided by the counsel I get from her."

"If it is a lady," the lawyer returned, laughing, "I give you up. But come and see me to-morrow."

Arthur went out by the private door, forgetting all about Mr. MacIntyre, who still sat behind "The Times," waiting. The time passed on — an hour or two — before the lawyer came again into the outer office. Perhaps he kept his man waiting on purpose, after the sweet and gentle practice of a Bismarck, "letting him cook in his own juice."

"What! — you there still, Mr. MacIntyre? I thought you gone long ago, with Mr. Durnford. Come in again, — come and have a glass of sherry. Now, then, sit down, — sit down. We are men of business here, and shall soon understand each other. You will find that, Mr. MacIntyre, if you are a judge of sherry; and I have no doubt you are a very excellent judge!" —

"Pretty well — pretty well. I am better at whiskey."

"Aha! very good — very good, indeed. Reminds me of a thing I once heard said. But never mind now; let me give you another glass. Dry, you observe, but generous. A fat wine. A wine with bone and muscle. I knew you'd like it." He sat down opposite his visitor, clapped him on the knee, and laughed. "And now let us talk about this affair which you have been the means of bringing to light."

"Under Providence."

"Quite so. Under Providence, as you say. You know, I feel for Arthur Durnford's position in this case."

"I am but an instrument," said MacIntyre, with a solemn face and another pull at the sherry — "a vera humble instrument. But life is so. The moral philosopher has often called attention to the curious way in which our sins become pitfalls for our children. I could give you some striking passages indirectly bearing upon the point from Stewart and Reid. But perhaps, Mr. — I forget your name — you are not a parent?"

"He crossed his legs, and brought the tips of his fingers together."

"Another time, my dear sir, another time. By the way, is it not *rather* unusual for an Englishman to marry a mulatto?"

"Most unusual. Nothing ever surprised me so much. I have often observed, in my progress through life, that" —

"Yes. The circumstance will tell in court."

Mr. MacIntyre visibly started.

"You will go into court?"

"Doubtless," returned the lawyer, watch-

ing his man, in whom, however, he saw no other sign of emotion. "Doubtless — your own evidence will be the main chain, so to speak. I hope you don't mind cross-examination."

"When a medicine, however disagreeable, has to be taken, it must be taken."

"Quite so. They will probably inquire into all your antecedents — eh? — ask you all sorts of impudent questions — ha! ha! Whether you ever got into trouble? We, the lawyers for our side, will make it our business to hunt up every thing about you."

"What trouble?"

"Into the hands of the law, you know — eh? Oh, most absurd, I assure you! I remember a similar case to this, when the principal witness was obliged to confess that he had sold his information. The case was lost, sir — lost by that simple fact. Now, you see, what an ass that man was! Had he gone to the lawyers on the other side, a respectable firm like ours, — had he come to me, for instance, in a friendly way, and said 'My dear sir, I have certain papers — I am a needy man. There they are. We are men of the world.' Had he, in fact, behaved as a man of sense, he would have been, sir — for in losing the case he lost his reward — he would have been" — here the speaker looked sharply in the face of Mr. MacIntyre — "a thousand pounds in pocket."

He remained stolid — only helping himself to another glass of wine.

"Very good thing, Mr. — really, I have not caught your name."

"Never mind, sir — never mind my name. It is on the door-plate, if you wish to read it. But your opinion now as to my man's stupidity?"

"Well, you see — it may be, after all, a question of degree. I am myself induced to think, that, if you had offered him ten thousand, he might have accepted. Money down, of course."

The cool audacity of this indirect proposal staggered the lawyer. He put the stopper in the decanter of sherry, and rose.

"I should like to see you again, Mr. MacIntyre."

"Mr. Arthur has gone to see Philip. Do you know Arthur Durnford, sir?"

"I believe I do."

"Not so well as I do. I will tell you something about him. He is ready to do any thing that he thinks honorable, even to strip himself to the last shilling; and he is jealous that no word should be breathed against his father. He is now gone to consult Miss Madeleine. I know what her advice will be."

"Well?"

"And do you know Philip? No — not

so well as I do. I left him a ruined man. That you know, perhaps. He will do any thing for money when it is wanted to save his honor. He wants it now for that purpose. And he would do any thing in the whole world to remove the stain of illegitimacy and black blood. The latter is impossible. The former can now be arranged. Ten thousand pounds, sir? Good heavens! If an estate is worth more than four thousand a year, and if you have got three times ten thousand accumulated — Do you know the story of the Sibyl, Mr. — really, I forget your name. Never mind. You remember the story, sir? Probably you had *some* humanities when you were a boy. She came back, sir, again and again; and the third time her price was three times that of her first."

"In point of fact, Mr. MacIntyre, you want to sell your information for ten thousand pounds. It is a disgraceful" —

Mr. MacIntyre started, and opened his eyes.

"The absence of the reasoning faculty in England is *vera* wonderful. Man! I was talking of general principles. I was giving you my opinion on the creature that would not sell his information. I would have you to know, sir, that I am not in the habit of selling any thing. I am a Master of Arts, sir, of an ancient and honorable University — the University of Aberdeen. And I wish ye good-morning, sir."

He put on his hat, and stalked away with dignity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ARTHUR went to Madeleine for advice, being one of those who, when they have made up their minds to a line of action, are not satisfied without being fortified in their design by their friends.

He called after dinner, and found the two ladies alone, — Mrs. Longworthy asleep, and Madeleine reading.

"Coming in here," he said, in a low voice, "is like coming into a haven of repose. You are always peaceful."

"Yes, — a woman's conflicts are below the surface mostly. And my own troubles lie two miles away, as you know. When are you really going to make up your mind to come and help us?"

"What am I to do? Teach science again?"

"No; lecture, start clubs, give concerts — you play very well — write tracts, do all sorts of things that will help the people to raise themselves."

"I am afraid I should not do for it, Madeleine. But I will try to join you. Only first give me your advice on a very serious matter."

He told his story.

"Your father married to a mulatto girl? Arthur, it is impossible."

"So I should have said; but it seems true. There are the certificates of marriage, duly signed and attested. And not by the man MacIntyre himself — or we might suspect them — but by a legal firm of Palmiste. You know them. There can be no doubt whatever. And Philip is my brother."

"I always knew it," murmured Mrs. Longworthy, waking up to enjoy her lazy triumph. "I told you, Arthur, that your father had no brothers."

"I suppose," Arthur continued, "that by some accident this mulatto girl, my father's first wife, died early, and that on hearing of her death my father married again. But MacIntyre knows nothing of this: he only knows that Marie — we will go on calling her Marie — went away to England."

"And the result of the whole?"

"Would be, if the claim were substantiated, that I have nothing: I am a beggar. All the estate, and all the accumulations, go to Philip."

"Have you seen Philip?"

"Not yet. I shall go and see him in the morning. I have not seen him for more than four months. You know, we were three months in Italy; but I have heard one or two stories about him. I am afraid he has lost money betting."

"What are you going to do?"

"The lawyer says fight. What ought I to do, Madeleine?"

"Fighting means further exposure of old scandals, and raking up private histories which may as well be left buried. Is there no middle way?"

"None. Either he is the rightful heir, or I am. To Phil it means not only fortune, but also legitimacy. I know now — I have known for some little time — what it is that has made Phil what he is. It is not the love of that fast life to which he belongs, so much as his constant sense of his birth, and the tinge of the black blood. Can you not understand it, Madeleine?"

"But if the certificates are correct, and not forgeries, there can be no doubt whatever of the thing."

"There can be none, — Philip is the heir."

They were silent for a while, Mrs. Longworthy only giving to the group that feeling of repose which is caused by the long breathing of one who slumbers.

"If it will make you work, Arthur, whispered Madeleine, "it will be a good thing for you. Let it go, my friend; let your brother take it, and raise no further questions about your father's private history. It may be all a forgery, put together by that creature, your Scotch tutor; only be very sure that Philip knows nothing about it. Go out into the world, and work with other men. It will be better for you. Or come and work with me."

"That is impossible, Madeleine," he whispered, — "except on one condition."

She flushed scarlet for a moment, and then she answered directly, and to the point.

"I know what your condition is. We have known each other so long, Arthur, that I am afraid."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I am afraid that our old brother and sister feeling may be all that you can have for me."

"Listen a moment, Madeleine. When I saw you first, — I mean six months ago, — I was afraid of you. You were so queenly, so beautiful, so unlike the child I loved so many years ago. When I came here day after day, and found you always the same, — always kind, thoughtful, sisterly, — the old feeling arose again, and I felt once more that, as of old, we were brother and sister; but when I was with you abroad, when we were together every day and all day, that feeling died away again, and another has sprung up in its place. Madeleine, I cannot work with you as you wished, because I love you. If you were another girl, if I did not know you so well, I should make fine speeches about coming to you as a beggar, now that I have lost all my money; but you do not want these. Let me go, or bid me stay; but, Madeleine, whatever you do, do not let me lose your friendship."

"You are sure you love me, Arthur," she murmured between her lips, — her eyes softened, her cheeks glowing.

"Am I sure? Do you know that I have sprung into new being since I found I loved you? My blood flows faster, my life has quickened. I can feel, I can hope. Madeleine, I can work. Before, what was my very existence? It was life without life, light without sunshine, work without a purpose, days that brought neither hope nor regret. Do I love you, Madeleine?"

"Then, Arthur," she whispered, leaning forward so that her lips met his, "I have always loved you. Take me, I am altogether yours."

It was then that Mrs. Longworthy showed the real goodness of her heart. She had been awake for some moments, and was taking in the situation with all her eyes.

Now she rose, and, gathering her skirts round her, she swept slowly out of the room, remarking as she went, —

"You will find me in the dining-room, my dears, as soon as you have done talking."

They sat and talked together, hand in hand, of the life that they would lead, of the perfect confidence there should be between them, of all high and sweet things that a man can only tell to a woman. Young fellows whisper to each other something of their inner life, — it can only be done between eighteen and twenty-two, — and ever after there is a bond of union between them that is always felt, if not acknowledged. Sometimes, too, at night, on the deck of a ship, when the moonlight is broken into ten thousand fragments in the white track, and the stars are gazing solemnly at us with their wide and pitying eyes, men may lay bare the secrets of their soul. One of the many whom I have known — he is ten thousand miles from here — in my wanderings abroad — I spent six months beneath the same roof with him — was wont to rise at dead of night, and pace the veranda for an hour or two. If you heard him, and got up to join him, he would *talk* to you. The memory of his talk is with me still. I remembered it in the morning, but he did not. Which was the real man, which was the false, I never knew. One lived by day, and one by night. I think the man of the night — he who showed me his thoughts — was the true man. He is the one whom I love to recall.

While they talked, Mrs. Longworthy slumbered by the table in the dining-room.

Outside, Laura was wandering in the cold and pitiless streets.

At the house at Notting Hill, Philip and MacIntyre were drinking together, — Philip to drown his excitement, which had absolutely driven Laura, for the time, out of his head; Mr. MacIntyre, to drown his anxiety. If he lost this stake! But it looked like winning.

Between the two were a couple of champagne bottles, empty. At stroke of ten, MacIntyre rang the bell for tumblers. At twelve, Philip went to bed too drunk to speak. At one, Mr. MacIntyre fell prone upon the hearth-rug, and slumbered there. In the morning, at seven, he awoke, and, finding where he was, got up, rubbed his nose thoughtfully, and went home to Koppel Street.

"It's wonderfu'," he remarked when he got back to his lodgings, and sat down to breakfast, "what a restorer is the morning air. When I go down to Scotland I

shall always get up early, to shake off the whiskey of the night. Elizabeth, my lassie, I think you may bring me another rasher of bacon."

CHAPTER XXV.

I GOT this address of yours from MacIntyre," said Arthur, calling on Philip at midday. "Why have you been hiding away so long?"

"There has been no hiding," said Philip, half sullenly.

Then both men paused, thinking of the words that were to be spoken between them.

Arthur was the first to speak.

"Of course you know what MacIntyre came to tell me,"

"Of course I know it."

"Whatever happens, Philip, let us be friends still. If it is clear that my father married — was married — before he married my mother, there is nothing more to be said."

Both flushed scarlet.

"You see, Arthur, I have known since I was fifteen years old, — no matter how, — that I am your half-brother. This question is more to me than property. It is legitimacy."

"I know."

"But go by what your lawyer advises. Let us make a legal question of it all."

"My lawyer says fight."

"Then fight."

"Fighting means bringing the private life of our father into public, making known things that ought not to be revealed. I think I cannot fight, Phil."

"But I *must*, Arthur."

"Yes, and I must give way. After all, Phil, it matters very little to me, so far as the money goes. I shall have to work; but I am a man of very simple habits. You will make a better planter than I. You will go out, and do great things for Palmiste."

"Not I. I fight for my legitimacy. I shall do no great things, either here or in Palmiste."

"Let me tell you about the property, Phil. No, — it is best that you should know. It is a very good property. In ordinary years, when there is no hurricane, it is worth more than four thousand pounds a year. I do not spend one-fourth of that amount. There are consequently large accumulations. I should think I am worth thirty thousand pounds, — that is you are worth."

"It is not the value of the property" —

"I know. Still you ought to learn all that is at stake. This is yours. I surrender it all, rather than go to law over our father's grave."

"I must prove my legitimate birth, if I can, Arthur. Think of it. Think what it is to me, who have all along been weighted with my birth, to be made free, — free and equal to all other men."

"I do think of it. I think a great deal of it. If I were in your place, nothing should persuade me to forego the chance of setting this right. Still, I believe you have always exaggerated the importance of the point."

"It may be so. I do not think so."

"And now, Phil, let us talk it over completely. I am in your hands. The whole estate will be yours as soon as the transfer can be made; but you will not let me go quite empty-handed!"

"Good heavens, — no!" cried Philip. "I believe you are the most chivalrous man in the world. Empty-handed! no: take what you will."

"Give me what you have yourself, and I shall be content."

"You mean what I had, I suppose. Make it double, Arthur, and I shall be content, — content in a way. How is any man to be contented who has the slave blood in his veins? Look here." He pulled his short, curly black hair. "This comes from the negro wool. And look here." He held out his hand. "Do you see the blue below the nails? That comes from the negro blood. And look at my eyes. Do you see the black streak beneath them? Negro blood, I tell you. And generation after generation may pass, but these marks never pass away. My face, at least, is like my father's. I am more like him than you are, Arthur."

"You are too sensitive, Phil. Do you really seriously think the old prejudices are founded in reason? Do you imagine that you are the least worse for having this little admixture of race in your blood?"

"I do," said his brother. "I know that I am worse. I feel it. When white men are calm, I am excited. When they are careless about their superiority, I am anxious to assert mine. When they are self-possessed, I am self-conscious. When they are at ease, I am vain. I know my faults. I can do things as well as any man, but I can do nothing as well as some men. That is the curse of the mulatto, the octoroon, or whatever you call him. Unstable as water, we never excel. So far we are like Judah, the son of Jacob, founder, you know, of the celebrated tribe of that name."

They were silent for a while.

"Even now I have made myself a greater fool, a greater ass, than you would conceive possible. If ever you hear stories about me, Arthur, — by Jove, you are sure to hear them!" — he suddenly remembered Venn, and his friendship with Arthur, — "think that I am more than sorry; not repentant, because I do not see any good in repentance. Milk that is spilt, eggs that are broken, money that is spent, sins that are committed, are so many *faits accomplis*. Well, never mind. Let us return to business. You will take the accumulated funds."

"No: I will take ten thousand pounds, and I shall be rich."

"Have what you like. And now take me to your lawyer's, and let us tell him what we are going to do; and if at any moment, Arthur, either now or hereafter, you wish to rescind your transfer, you shall do it, and we will fight. By gad, the prodigal son always gets the best of it! The good man toils and moils, and gets nothing. Then, you see, the scapegrace comes home. Quick, the fatted calf; — kill, cook, light the fire, make the stuffing, roast the veal, broach the cask, and spread the feast."

So he passed, in his light way, from repentance to cynicism, happy at heart in one thing, — that now he could face his creditors and meet his engagements.

It was a week after this that MacIntyre, who had been calling every day at the Burleigh Club, and at Notting Hill, — being a prey to the most gnawing anxieties he had ever known, — at last found Philip at home.

He was greeted with a shout of laughter, — not, it is true, of that kind which we are accustomed to associate with the mirth of innocence. Perhaps Philip's joyousness had something in it of the Sardinian character.

"Come, Prince of Evil Devices, and receive your due."

"You are pleased to be facetious," observed MacIntyre.

"Haven't I a right to be facetious? Do not I owe it to you that I have got rid of a wife, and come into a fortune? Sit down, man, and let us have a reckoning. My engagements are met. It is all settled. Arthur retires, and the heir-at-law steps in. Rid of a wife, — with dishonor saved, and honor gained, — what do I owe you? Five thousand is too paltry a sum to speak of."

MacIntyre turned perfectly white, and shivered from head to foot.

"The papers are signed, — the transfer is completed. I am in possession of the estate of Fontainebleau and fifteen thousand

pounds in stocks. It is your doing, MacIntyre. You shall have the money bargained for. Give me up the agreement."

He took it from his pocket, and handed it over, with trembling hands. He was unable to speak, for very astonishment. He grew faint, and staggered against the table.

Phil caught him by the arm.

"Why, what is the matter, man? Will you have some brandy?"

"Not now, Phil, — not now. Let me sit down a moment, and recover myself."

Presently he started up again.

"Now," he cried, — "at once; let me have no delay. The money, Phil, — the money. Let me handle it. Ah! At last, — at last! I have been anxious, Phil. I was afraid that there was some link missing, — some possible doubt; but it is all right. I have won the prize I worked for."

"You have won the compensation you were talking about the other night."

"Yes," said the philosopher, — "the compensation, — ah, yes, the compensation! It has come."

"And without any of the little hankey-pankey that the world has agreed to condemn, — isn't that so?"

"Surely, — surely!"

He looked at Philip with steady eyes, but shaky lips.

"A righteous man, you know, never begs his bread."

"I've begged mine, like the unrighteous — or next door to it. The next door to it, may be, was not included in the text."

"Obviously, the inference is that you are a righteous man. But, come, — one word of explanation first. You know when I met you in the street?"

"As if I shall ever forget the time."

"You had those papers in your pocket then?"

"They have never left me since I took them away from Palmiste."

"Why did you not produce them at once?"

"Because the risk was too great. I wanted to sell them. I wanted to see how you would take the chance. It was one I could not afford to risk. When I saw you going down hill, I knew that I had only to wait for the end. Every thing helped me. You became more and more involved. I became more and more certain; but it was not till the very end that I dared bring them out."

"And then you thought you could win?"

"I did. I knew that under the cloud of misfortunes any of the old misplaced generosity to your milksoy of a brother would be finally put away and done with, and that

the lure — legitimacy and a fortune — would be too much for you to withstand. I rejoiced, Philip — I rejoiced."

Philip was silent. By all the rules he should have kicked this man then and there. But he was accustomed to the calculating and unscrupulous ways of the creature. Besides, he half liked him. The very openness of his wickedness was a kind of charm. It was only one more confession, — a confession already more than half made.

"You have won, then. Let that be your consolation. And now tell me, MacIntyre. Swear by all that you hold sacred, — Stay, is there any thing you hold sacred?"

"Money — I will swear by money. Or drink — I will swear by drink."

"Swear, then, anyhow, that you will tell me the truth. Did my father write those letters?"

"He did, Philip — I swear it. He did, indeed."

Only the smallest *suppressioni veri*, — only the dates that were added long afterwards by himself.

"And the marriage. Is that register really in the church book?"

"I swear it is there. Did you not see the attestation of the Palmiste lawyers? It is really there!"

So it was. He might have added, to complete the truth of the attestation, that he had himself placed it there.

"Then I am the lawful heir. I have not defrauded Arthur."

"You have not. What does Arthur get out of it?"

"Ten thousand."

"And vera handsome too. Double of my share. Arthur has done well. Now give me my money, Phil."

Philip gave him a bank pass-book.

"I have paid into your account at this bank the sum of five thousand pounds, — you can see the note of the amount. Here is your check-book. Go, now, man, and be happy in your own way."

"Yes, I will go. You are a rich man. I am as rich as I wish to be. My old maxims will no longer be of any use either to you or me. It pains me only to think that I must not, with my experience, dissemble my convictions and go over to the other side, preaching in future that honesty is the best policy. I may vera likely give lectures to show how merit is rewarded, and steady effort always commands success. Steady effort has been, as you know, of great use to me. Industry is the best thing going. We always get what we deserve. Every thing is for the best. Whatever is, is right. The prosperous man goes back to the copy-books for his philosophy, and all

his reading is thrown away. Now, my experience is the contrary. It is only the clumsy sinners who get punished. The innocent man very often receives the flogging. Therein the moral world differs from the natural. For if you run your head against a post, you infallibly get a headache. He who would be rich must also be cautious. If he can escape detection, he will acquire money, and therefore happiness. My dear pupil, a word of parting advice."

"No," replied Philip. "Go. I hardly know whether to thank you or to curse you. I think I must curse you. You have poisoned the atmosphere of life for me. I have got riches without enjoyment. I can never be happy again, with the memory of the past — your doing."

"Poor little leddy," sighed MacIntyre. "I'm vera sorry, indeed, for her hard fate. I wish it had never been done. Eh, Phil, — it was an awfu' piece of wickedness" —

"It was. God forgive us both! But it can never be forgiven."

"I'm vera sorry, Phil. It was a clumsy thing; but there — we won't talk about it. What was it I was telling you some time ago, Phil? The poor man never repents, — it is only the rich. See, now — I am rich, and I begin to repent at once. Eh, man, it is a terrible time I have before me! There's just an awfu' heap to repent for; and pocket handkerchiefs, too, very expensive. As soon as I get settled, I shall begin. But where? Phil, I think I shall work backwards. It will come easier so. Obsairve. He who tackles his worst foe at once has little to fear from the rest. The drink, and the troubles at Sydney, — all these things are venial. But the lassie, Phil, the lassie, — I must begin my repentance with the lassie."

"You will never begin your repentance at all. You will go on getting drunk till you die."

"Philip Durnford," returned Mr. MacIntyre magisterially, "You pain me. After an acquaintance of nearly twenty years — after all the maxims I have taught you, and the corpus of oreiginal and borrowed philosophy that I have compiled and digested for you — to think that you could say a thing like that. Know, sir, once for all, that the man at ease with fortune never drinks, save in moderation. The philosopher gets drunk when his cares become too much for him. He changes his world when the present is intolerable. Some poor creatures commit suicide. The true philosopher drinks. He alone is unhappy who has not the means of getting drunk. When I was between the boards, I am not ashamed to confess, I used to save two-

pence a day. That made a shilling a week. With that I was able to get drunk on Sunday, by taking two pennyworths of gin and porter in alternate swigs. And that is all over. Philip, my pupil, I shall go away. I shall go back to Scotland, among my own people, as an elder of the kirk, which I intend to be. I shall set an example of rigid doctrine, sabbatarian strictness, and stern morality. After a', it is good for the vulgus — the common herd — to be kept to strict rules. But drink — no sir. Intoxication and Alexander MacIntyre have parted company. I'm far from saying that I shall not take my glass whiles — the twal' hoor, especially, — that is but natural; but intemperance! sir, the thought degrades me."

He buttoned up his coat, and put on his hat.

"Farewell, Philip! you will never see me again. As for that poor young thing" —

"Do not provoke me too much," said Philip, growing pale.

"I was only going to say, that, if you can take her back, it is your duty. I'm vera sorry. She was bonnie, she was kind, she was *douce*, she was faithful. Ah! Phil, Phil! it is a terrible thing to think of — the wickedness of the world! I must go away at once, and begin my repentance."

He shook his head from side to side, seized Philip by the hand, and disappeared.

And this was the last that Philip Durnford ever saw of his old tutor.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LEAVING the house, poor little Lollie walked quickly away into the dark November mist, and down the road. She had no purpose; for as yet she had but one thought to get away, — to see the last of a house which had witnessed her shame and suffering; to take herself somewhere — it mattered not where — till the dull, dead pain in her brow would go away, and she should feel again able to see things clearly, — able to go to Mr. Venn, and tell him all. As she went along the streets, and passed the lighted shops, it seemed that every woman shunned her, or looked at her in contempt, and every man stared. In all the passers-by she detected the glance of scorn. The very beggars did not ask her for alms; the crossing-sweepers allowed her to pass unnoticed.

It was only two o'clock, and she had more than two hours of daylight before her. She pulled down her veil, and walked on, her fingers interlaced, like a suppliant's,

feeling for the lost wedding-ring. She passed down the long Edgware Road, which seemed to have no end, and where the noise of the cabs nearly drove her mad. At last she came to the Park, where the comparative quiet soothed her nerves; but she walked on, and presently found herself in Piccadilly. She hurried across the road here, and got into the Green Park, which was even quieter and more deserted than the other. And so at last into St. James's, the best of the three, beyond which arose the intolerable noise and tumult of the streets. She sat down on one of the benches. It was the very same bench where she had once sat with Philip, talking over the meaning of love and marriage. Alas! she knew by this time what one might mean, but not the other. For as she sat alone, and the early evening closed round her, she felt how, through all, her marriage was but a mockery of every thing, — of love, because she never loved him; of a real ceremony, because the man was no clergyman. How there was no religion in what she had done, no duty, no prudence, — nothing but a vain and ignorant desire to please her guardian. And, after all, he had turned her off.

But as yet she could think of nothing clearly.

Two hours since she left him, — only two hours! — and it seemed an age, and the last three months a dream of long ago. And as she tried to think, the stream of her thoughts would rush backwards in her head, as if stopped and turned by some sudden dam.

Big Ben struck four. Presently there came to her a policeman, with hirsute countenance and kindly eyes.

"The Park gates shut at half-past four, miss. Don't you think you had better not sit any longer under this dripping tree?"

She got up at once — submissive. Poor little Lollie, always obedient, always *douce*.

"I will go if you like."

"Hadn't you better go home, miss?"

She made no answer, but looked at him sadly for a moment, and then, drawing her veil tighter over her face, went slowly through the gates, and passed through the Horse Guards. In the Strand, the shops were all lit up, and things looked brighter. She went down the street slowly, looking into every window as she passed, trying to think what it was she wanted to buy. Here were chains, gold watches, and silver cups; and here — what is it makes her heart leap up within her, and her pale cheek glow? — a tray of wedding-rings. She hurried in, she held out her finger to be measured without saying a word, and pointed to the tray. The ring cost her a

guinea, and so she had nineteen shillings left. But she came out relieved of a little of the pain that oppressed her, and went on happier, as if something had been restored to her.

It was nearly six when she came to Chancery Lane; and as she saw the old familiar, ugly street once more, a great yearning came over her heart, for was it not the street that leads to Gray's Inn?

"I will arise and go unto my father," said the poor prodigal, — say all of us, when sorrow and punishment fall upon us. "I will go to Mr. Venn," thought Lollie.

She quickened her step, and came to the familiar portals. No one saw her go in. She mounted the stairs — ah, how often had she run up before! — thinking what she should say. Alas! when she got there, the outer door was shut, and Mr. Venn was not at home.

Then her heart fell; and she burst into low wailings and tears, leaning her cheek against the door, as if that could sympathize with her trouble. It was the hour when every man in Gray's Inn was gone to dinner, and no one was on the staircase to hear her.

She might have known, had she reflected. But she could not think. Time had no more any meaning for her. She thought that Mr. Venn was gone away altogether, and that she had no longer a single friend left in the whole world. So, when the paroxysm of tears, the first she had shed, had passed, she crept down stairs again, and turned away to go out at the north gate, by Raymond's Buildings. Alas, alas! had she taken the other turning she would have met Venn himself, almost as sad as she was, returning home to his desolate chambers.

Seven o'clock, — eight, — nine. The shops are being shut now, and the streets not so crowded. There are not so many carts about, which is good for her nerves; but the rain is pouring upon her. She is somewhere about Regent's Park — walking, walking still. The rain falls heavily. Her dress is wet through, and clings to her limbs; but she staggers on mechanically.

Hartley Venn is in his chambers, sitting over the fire, brooding.

Philip is drinking, and playing cards.

Men pass by and speak to her. She does not hear, and takes no notice.

Twelve o'clock, — one o'clock. The passers in the street are very few now.

A rush of many people and of galloping horses. There is a fire, and the cavalcade of rescue runs headlong down the street, followed by a little mob of boys and men. They are always awake, these boys and men, ready for plunder.

Then silence again.

Two o'clock. The street is quite empty now. Then from a side street there are loud screams and cries, and a woman rushes into the road with a wild shriek. She passes close to Lollie. Her face is bleeding, her clothes are torn. She waves her arms like some wild Cassandra, as one who prophesies the woe that shall fall upon the city. But it is nothing. Only the wail of despair and misery; for she is starving, and her husband in a drunken rage has struck her down, and trampled on her. Oh! brothers and sisters, how we suffer, how we suffer for our sins!

Three o'clock. She is in Oxford Street, the stony-hearted. It is quite empty. Not even a policeman in sight. Her eyes are heavy and dim; her head is burning; an unnatural strength possesses her limbs; her shoulders have fallen forward. Is this Hartley Venn's little girl? This with the bowed head, the draggled dress, the weary gait? O Hartley, could you have seen her then, it would have been bad for Philip and his tutor! But Hartley is sound asleep, and so is Philip; so, too, is Mr. MacIntyre. They are all asleep and comfortable in their beds, and only the tender and delicate girl is wandering about in the night under the rain.

The city is sleeping. A strange hush has fallen over London. Not the sound of a single wheel, not a footstep. The silence strikes her; for it seems to have come suddenly. She lifts her head, and looks round, with a moan of weariness and agony.

After her there creeps silently, on bare feet, a creature in the semblance of a man.

He is tall, nearly six feet high, lean and emaciated. His scanty clothes are rags; his trousers are so tight that the sharp bones seem projecting through them. His arms are too long for the ragged sleeves of his tattered coat. He has no hat. His face is black with dirt, and wisps of a fortnight's beard are sticking in patches over it. His hair is long and matted. His eyes are sharp. It is the wolf of London, — the wehr-wolf of civilization. In what lair does he crouch all day? Where does he hide while honest folk are up and doing.

She does not hear him as his naked feet press close upon her. As he gets nearer, he looks round quickly and furtively, like a beast of prey before he makes his spring. No policeman is in sight. His long fingers clutch her shoulder, and she feels his quick breath upon her cheek. She starts, and turns with a shriek of terror.

"Have you got any money?" he hisses. "Give it to me, — give it to me quick, or I will murder you."

She stared for a moment, and then, un-

derstanding so much, put her hand in her pocket, and drew out her purse. He looked up and down the street, and then, snatching it from her hand, swiftly fled down a court and was lost.

Then the great, bare streets filled her with terror, and she turns out of it. Perhaps there are no wolves in the small streets.

So, presently, she finds herself in Covent-garden Market. Light, activity, noise. The early market carts are arriving. She goes under the piazza, and, sitting on a basket, falls fast asleep in the midst of it all.

She sleeps for nearly two hours. Then she is awakened by a rough but not unkindly touch of her arm.

"Come, young woman, I want my basket."

She sprang to her feet, trying to remember where she was. Two or three people were staring at her. A great red-faced woman among the rest, — a coarse, rough, rude, hard-drinking creature.

They were speaking to her, but she could not understand. It seemed a dream.

"Leave her to me," said the woman. "You go about your business, all of you. I know a lady when I see her. You leave her, all of you, to me. Come, my dear, don't try to say a word. Don't 'ee speak now, or else ye'll begin to cry. Wait a bit — wait a bit."

She put her arms round Lollie's waist, and half led, half carried her, to a coffee-stall, of which, indeed, she was the proprietor.

"Now, me darlin', sit 'ye down on my seat, and taste this."

Laura had eaten nothing since breakfast the preceding day, say eighteen hours. The coffee restored her to a sense of reality, for she had fallen into a state almost of *coma*. She drank the cup, and handed it back to her new friend.

"Now, my dear, another, and a bit of bread and butter. Don't 'ee say a word, now, or ye'll begin to cry."

She took a little bread and butter; and then, overcome with weariness, her head fell upon the tray where the bread and butter stood, and she was asleep again.

The good soul covered her with a shawl, — not the cleanest in the world, but the only 'one she had, — and went on with her early coffee trade. At seven she awakened her.

"I must go now, my dear," she said. "I'm an hour almost behind my time, and the childer want me; but I wouldn't waken you. Are you better now?"

Lollie felt in her pocket for her purse.

"I remember," she said, "a man robbed

me last night of all I had. It was nineteen shillings. "Stay," she added, taking off her locket, — Venn's present — "take this for your kindness."

"I won't," said the woman stoutly.

"You must. Please take it. I think I should have died if it hadn't been for you. You are a good woman."

"Don't 'ee, now, miss," she answered, taking the locket, — "don't 'ee, now, miss, or ye'll cry."

And then she began to cry herself; and Lollie left her, and slipped away.

On the Embankment, while the day slowly breaks, and as the light returns, the poor child begins to realize the desolateness of her position. She leans upon the low wall, and tries to think what she will do. Only one thing occurs to her. She must go back to Gray's Inn, and find out where Mr. Venn is. She has no money to buy breakfast, she has nowhere even to sit down; and her limbs are trembling with fatigue. She was almost staggering now as she reached the gate of the Inn. From the other side of the road, she saw the porter and the people who knew her face, standing in the gateway. So she went round by the side entrance in Warwick Court to the door. This time, at least, she would find him in his chambers. Alas! no. The door was still shut, as the gate of Paradise was to the Peri; and her courage died away within her. Inside lay Hartley, sound asleep; for it was but nine o'clock. Then she slowly and sadly descended the staircase. Should she go and ask the porter where he was? Not yet, — presently. She would wait a little, and make one more trial. And so, down Holborn and into Long-acre, with a dazed idea of finding her way to Covent Garden, where there might be another basket to sit upon.

But as she crawled along, her cheeks blanched, her eyes heavy and dull, neither seeing nor feeling any thing, some one passed her, started, ran back, and caught her by the arm, crying —

"Miss Lollie, Miss Lollie!" And she fell fainting forward.

It was no other than that Mary of whom mention has already been made. Mary the sinful, you know. She was on her way to rehearsal at Drury Lane. For there was the grandest of all grand spectacles "on," and she was one of the most prominent of the ladies engaged specially — a dignified position nearest to the lights — in the joyous dance of village maidens. She also had to appear as one of the queen's personal attendants, in a procession which beat into fits any procession ever made on the stage or off it. She was

going along with a friend, engaged in the same line, talking of her boy.

"And the notice he takes, — it's wonderful. Only two years old, and he understands every thing you tell him. And the words he can say; and good as gold with it all. I'm making him a little pair of — Oh, good gracious, it's Lollie Collingwood!"

She lived close by, in the pleasant seclusion of a two-pair back King Street, Long-acre.

The two lifted Laura between them, and half carried her, half led her, to the door, and dragged her up stairs, because now she gave way altogether, and lay lifeless in their arms. They placed her on the bed, and waited to see if she would recover. Presently she opened her eyes, gave a dreamy look at them as they leaned over the bed, and closed them again.

"Who is it?" whispered the friend.

"Hush! Don't make any noise! It's Mr. Venn's little girl. Oh, dear! oh, dear! and she so pretty and good! See, she's got a wedding-ring on. Go down, and get the kettle, my dear; and go on to rehearsal without me. I shall be fined; but I know who will pay the fine. And bring Georgie up. Perhaps the sight of him will do her good, — it always does me; and come back, my dear, when rehearsal's over, I shall want you."

She took off Lollie's hat and jacket, her boots and wet stockings, covering her poor cold feet with blankets; and then smoothed and tidied her hair, hanging dank and wet upon her cheek as if she had been drowned.

But Lollie made no movement, lying stupefied and senseless.

Presently came up the other woman, bearing tea in one hand, and little Georgie, making a tremendous crowing, in the other.

"Is she come to?" whispered the girl.

"No; but she will presently. Go you, or you'll be late too; and don't forget to come back as soon as you can. Where's the sugar? Georgie, boy, you've got to be very quiet. Sit down and play with the spoon, and mother will give you sugared bread and butter."

The child immediately sat down, and assumed the silence of a deer-stalker.

"Did you ever see such a boy?" his mother went on. "As good as gold. Now the milk; and ask Mrs. Smith to trust me another quarter-hundred of coals. I must have a fire for this poor thing. Tell her there's them as will see it paid."

She made up the fire, tidied the room, so that it looked at least clean and neat; and then, pouring out the tea, brought it to the bedside.

"Lollie, my dear," she whispered, — "Lol-

lie, my little darling, open your eyes. It's only me, — it's only Mary, that you helped three years ago. Take some tea, dear; and lie down, and go to sleep, and I'll send for Mr. Venn."

At this name the girl opened her eyes, and half lifted her head, while she drank the tea. Then she lay back, looked round the room, pressed her hand to her head as if in pain, and shut her eyes again.

She lay like one dead, but for the light breathing to which her good Samaritan listened from time to time.

At two o'clock the friend came back, and Mary began to hunt about in drawers, in pockets, everywhere.

"I knew I'd got a piece left somewhere," she said at last, triumphantly producing a piece of note-paper the size of a man's hand, the remnant of a quire, the only purchase of note-paper she ever had occasion to make.

"I knew I'd got a piece left, but there's no ink. A pencil must do."

With some pains, for she was not one of those who write a letter every day, she indited a letter to Mr. Venn: —

"DEAR MR. VENN, — Come here as soon as you can. If you are out, come when you get back. Never mind what time it is. If it's midnight you must come.

"MARY."

"Take that," she whispered, "to Gray's Inn. If he is out, drop it into his letter-box; if he is in, tell him not to be bringing the old grandmother round. Laura don't want to see her, I fancy, so much as him."

On the bed the patient lay sleeping through all that day; for Mr. Venn did not come. A sudden shock makes one stupid. So long as it cannot be understood, one can go to sleep over it. It is only when the dull, slow pain succeeds the stupefying blow that we begin really to suffer. Lollie's sleep was what Mr. MacIntyre might have called a compensation due to her. And in her dreams she went back to her husband, and mixed up, with the little house at Notting Hill, her former happiness with Mr. Venn.

The hours sped, and the afternoon came on. Mary had her dinner, and put something on the hob for Lollie if she should wake. Then came tea-time; but she slept still, and the boy had to be put to bed. Then it was Mary discovered that Lollie was sleeping in clothes wet through and through.

She half raised her, pulled them off, and laid her back, with her own warm flannel dressing-gown wrapped round her.

No Mr. Venn.

Then Mary sat down by the fire, prepared to watch, and keep herself awake.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BUT where was Venn ?

He was engaged at a funeral ; no other, indeed, than that of Mrs. Peck herself. The old lady was dead, — not in consequence of her grand-daughter's elopement ; because when she found that little difference would be made in the allowance, she was a good deal more comfortable without her than with her. She died of some disease more common-place than a broken heart, — one for which the doctor brought her little phials of physic, and Hartley Venn pint bottles of port. As for the disappearance of the girl, that affected her chiefly in lowering the position she had hitherto held in the row. The transportation of a son or the disappearance of a daughter is held in some circles to be as much a disease as the scarlet fever. It is a thing which happens, somehow, in many most respectable families, and is not to be accounted for, or fought against.

The old woman grew worse instead of better, and presently kept her bed. Then Hartley got a nurse for her, and used to look in once a week or so to see how she was getting on. One day the inevitable message from across the river came to the dame in bed ; and she immediately sent for Hartley, in great trouble lest she should have to begin the journey before he arrived ; but he was in time.

"Is it about Lollie ?" he asked, expecting some message of forgiveness or love to the girl.

"No — no," she answered. "Drat the girl, with her fine learning and her ways ! It's myself this time, Mr. Venn, and time enough too, I think. All the things I've seen you give that child, and never a thing for me."

Hartley almost burst into a fit of laughter, it was so grotesque.

Here she was seized with a fit of coughing that nearly finished her off altogether.

"Oh, dear, dear ! The time's come, Mr. Venn, when you can make amends for your selfishness, and give *me* something too."

"My good soul, haven't I given you every thing you want ? Do you want more port wine ?"

"Better than that," she gasped. "I want a funeral. I haven't complained, have I, sir ? Not when I see the child decked out that fine as the theayter couldn't equal it, I haven't murmured ; because, says I to myself — oh, dear ! oh, dear ! — Mr. Venn, he's a good man, he is. He means it all for the best ; and the time will come. And now it has come. I want a funeral. If I

was to die to-night," she went on, "you'd save all the 'lowances, and the port wine. Think of that, now."

"I don't see what you want. A funeral ?"

"When Peck died we had a trifle saved and put by, — that was fifteen years ago ; and we did it properly. His brother came from Hornsey, and his two cousins from Camberwell ; and we all went respectable to Finchley. After the funeral — it was a cold day — we went to the 'Crown,' and sat round the fire, and cried, as was but right, and drank gin and water hot. Oh, dear ! and we all enjoyed ourselves. Let *me* have a funeral, too, Mr. Venn."

He promised ; and she died that very night, chuckling over the great happiness that had come to her. The two cousins from Camberwell, who had not been seen since the demise of the late Mr. Peck, could not be found ; but the brother from Hornsey turned up ; and Venn, anxious that the old man should really have a good time of it, went to the funeral himself, and gave him after it more gin and water than he could carry.

This pious act accomplished, he went to the club, and dined, going afterwards to Lynn's, where he sat till twelve, discoursing of funeral ceremonies of all nations ; so that it was after midnight when he got Mary's missive. He trembled when he read it. The blood rushed to his head, because it could mean but one thing, — his little girl ; and as he hurried down the streets to her lodging, he could find no formula for the prayer of his heart, which was for her safety and — for her purity.

"Everybody had gone to bed ; but Mary heard his step at the door, and let him in herself.

"What is it ?" he whispered, as she proceeded quickly to bolt the door again and put up the chain ; "what is it, girl ?"

"Hush !" she answered. "Pull off your boots. I'll carry them. She's up there, and asleep."

He crept up. On the bed there lay, still sleeping, her face upon her hand, her cheek all pale and blanched, her long hair streaming back upon the pillow, wrapped warm in all Mary's blankets, his Lollie, — his little girl. He made a movement towards her, but Mary held him back.

"Not yet — wait. She has been sleeping since one o'clock this morning. Let her be. Something dreadful has happened to her. Sit down and wait.

"Notice, Mr. Venn. She's got the same clothes on as she used to have. She must have been going back to you. Poor thing ! poor thing ! See here — her jacket, and

hat, and blue frock, and all — I know them every one. And look here.”

Very softly she laid back the blanket which covered her left hand. On the third finger was a wedding-ring.

Hartley bent down, and kissed the ring. His tears fell fast upon the little fingers.

“When will she wake?” he whispered.

“I don’t know, — any thing may wake her.”

“I shall stay here,” he replied; and sat down by the bed, in the only chair in the room.

Mary hesitated a moment, and then lay down on the extreme edge of the other side of the bed. Hartley noticed then that between her and Lollie lay the child.

In two moments she, too, was asleep; and the watch of the night began in earnest. Hartley saw how Mary had laid all her blankets and wraps upon his child, and left herself with nothing, not even a shawl. He took off his own great-coat, — he was ever a kind-hearted man, — and laid it over her shoulders, with a corner of a blanket across her feet, and then sat down again, shivering, — the fire was quite out, and the room was getting cold, — and waited.

Presently the candle went out suddenly, and then there was darkness and silence, save for the breath of the sleepers.

The tumult of his thoughts in this stillness was almost more than his nerves could bear. It was not till the girl left him that he had at all realized the hold she had upon his affections and her place in his life. He had been very lonely without her. He had longed with all his soul to see her again. There was no moment, now, when he was not ready to forgive every thing, nor when his arms were not open to her. The love he had for the girl was the outcome of so many years. She had so twisted and twined the tendrils of affection round him, that when she went away he was like some old tower from which its ivy, the growth of centuries, had been rudely and roughly dragged away. With the child coming every day, full of fresh thoughts, and eager for knowledge, there was always some compensation for the neglect of the world. Laura was his family: she it was who preserved his life from utter loneliness and disappointment. While he watched the growth of her mind, he forgot that his own was, as he was fond of calling it, a wreck. While he listened to her ideas, he forgot that his own were ruthlessly consigned to waste-paper baskets; and with her bright face and child-like ways, he had forgotten that he was getting on for forty, — a poor man still, and disappointed.

All these things crowded into his mind as he sat there, and a great hunger seized

his heart to have all things back again as they were before. He had been growing weary of late; the old things ceased to please him; there was little interest left in life; he felt himself getting old; he awoke in the morning without the former feeling that another day would bring its little basket of pleasure; he lay down at night with the new feeling that here was finished another of those gray-colored days which go to make up the total of a sad life. Would that all could be as it had been, — that the step of the child could be heard again upon the stairs, and the lessons renewed where they left off; but the waters run not back to the mountains. Old Mrs. Peck was lying buried in Finchley Cemetery. Laura was a woman; a wedding-ring was on her finger; her long eyelashes lay wet with tears upon her cheeks, — those cheeks that never knew a tear while he was there to kiss them. She moaned in her dreams who had once only smiled; and nothing could come back but the old, old, inextinguishable love.

So, minute by minute, the slow night passed along. Hartley sat through it motionless, in the dark, catching the breathing of the sleeper, though he could not see her face. After many hours, there came through the window the first faint streaks of a November dawn, growing stronger and stronger. When it fell on little Georgie’s face, it half roused him from his sleep; and, reaching out his arms to find his mother, the boy laid his little hand on Lollie’s neck, and she awoke. Woke with a start, and a rush of thoughts that made her half sit up and stare at the figure of Hartley, indistinct in the morning gloom, with strange, wild eyes.

“Where am I? — where am I?” she murmured, sinking back.

Hartley bent over, and raised her head, kissing her brow in his quiet, old-fashioned way.

“Open your eyes, my little girl. You are come home again. Thank God! you are come home again,” the tears raining thick upon her face.

She hardly as yet comprehended; but at last, sitting up in bed, she looked about the room, trying to remember. The bitter knowledge came at last; and, throwing her arms about his neck, she laid her face against his, crying pitifully, —

“O Mr. Venn, Mr. Venn!”

This was all her prayer. Hartley could not trust himself to answer. He clasped her in his arms, he held her face to his, and covered it with kisses, he called her a thousand names of love and endearment, — his child, his Lollie, his little daughter. And then Mary showed herself to be a young

woman of really a high order of feeling ; for, awakened by the voices, she got up from the edge of the bed on which she had slept all night, and, catching up the still sleeping boy, disappeared to some other part of the house, — I fancy to the back kitchen below, — and left them alone.

Presently, as the light grew stronger, Lollie recovered herself a little, and, in a quick, nervous way began to tell him her tale. Hartley listened with grinding teeth. She told all, extenuating nothing, hiding nothing, save some of the cruelty of her husband's last words. He stopped her then.

"You wrote to me from the place where you were married, my dear?"

"Yes. Mr. MacIntyre was to take the letter."

"And again from Vieuxcamp?"

"I wrote twice from Vieuxcamp."

"I got no letters at all, poor child, — not one. They suppressed them all. Go on. It was the day before yesterday. Where did you go when you left him?"

"I walked — I don't know. I walked all night. You were not in your chambers. It rained. I walked about all night. Somebody took away my purse. What was I to do, Mr. Venn? Where was I to go? A woman in Covent Garden gave me some coffee" —

"Tell me her name, Lollie, — tell me her name."

"I don't know. She had a stall at the corner of Bow Street."

"She had a stall at the corner of Bow Street," he repeated.

"And she went home at seven o'clock."

"Home at seven?" he said. "All night, Lollie? — all the cold, wet, dark night? O child, child! why did you not come to my rooms, and sit on the stairs till I came home?"

He held her close to his heart.

"All night — all night! Lollie, Lollie, my heart is breaking for you. One thing you have forgotten. Tell me the name of your husband."

"Philip Durnford."

"Arthur's cousin!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PHILIP DURNFORD, — Arthur's cousin, of whom he was always speaking. It seemed a new complication. Venn sat back in his chair, pondering.

"Promise me something, Mr. Venn, — promise me something. Do not harm Philip."

"Harm him!" he answered, with a fierce light in his eyes.

"For my sake, do not try to see him. Do not go in his way."

"My poor child!"

"But promise."

"Lollie, you ask too much. But what harm can I do him? I cannot go round to his tent with a knife, as a child of Israel would have done, and stab him till he die. I wish I could. I cannot even ask him to fight a duel. I would if I could. My aim should be steady, and my eye straight. Tell me what harm I can possibly do to him. True, I could go to him with a stick, and so relieve myself."

"No, Mr. Venn, you will not do that."

"Do not talk about him, child — do not talk about him. Let us talk of other things. And, first, to make you well. My child, how hot your head is! I will go and send a doctor to you. Lie down, and sleep again."

"I should like some tea," she said, sinking back exhausted. "I am thirsty. My hands are burning, and my head swims. Send me Mary, please."

He hurried down stairs, and brought up Mary; and then, promising to return in the afternoon, went away to send her a doctor. That done, he returned to his chambers, feeling lighter and happier than he had done for months past. So happy was he, that he set to work and burned no less than three immortal essays, because he suspected that they were deficient in joy and thankfulness, — two qualities which he now regarded as essential to a well-balanced mind. That sacrifice completed, he sat down before the fire, and fell fast asleep, thinking of how the good old days were to be restored to him.

When he awoke it was three o'clock, and he had had no breakfast. This was a trifling consideration, because coffee can be always made. He broke bread with a sense of happiness and gratitude that almost made his modest meal a sacrament, and then went back to his patient.

But on the stairs he was met by Mary.

"You can't come in, Mr. Venn. Lollie is very ill, and the doctor is with her. Don't be frightened. She's had too great a shock. You may come to-morrow."

He turned away, all his joy dashed. As he shut the door behind him, he ground his teeth savagely, and stood still for a moment.

"If my child" — shaking his hand at the silent heavens — "if my little girl does not get better, I will kill him — I will kill him! A life for a life. I will kill him!"

Then he wandered about the streets, following as nearly as he could the wander-

ings of Lollie during that night, and trying to imagine where she would stand for shelter. The fancy seized him to find out the man who robbed her. It was from a court on the north side of Oxford Street. He went along, turning into every court he could find, and prowling up and down with a vague sort of feeling that he might see the man, and know him by his long legs, his bare feet, and his crouching like a wolf. There were a good many wolf-like creatures about, but none that quite answered Lollie's description; and he desisted from the search at last, calling himself a fool, and so went home.

Then another notion seized him. He ordered the night porter to call him at four o'clock, and so went to bed.

At four he was awakened, and got up.

"Most extraordinary," he murmured, shivering, and lighting a candle, "the sensation of rising in the night. I quite understand now why the laboring classes, who always do it, never take tubs."

He dressed hastily, and went out into the court. The very last light had disappeared in the square. The last roysterer was gone to bed. The last student had knocked off work for the night.

"It gives one," he said to himself, "an Antipodean feeling. I feel as if I were on my head. Now I begin to understand why agricultural laborers are never boisterous in their spirits. This is enough to sadden Momus!"

Not a soul was in Holborn when he passed through the gate. He buttoned his great-coat tighter across his chest, and strode up the street, his footsteps echoing as he went.

"I wish it would rain," he said, "then I should understand the misery of it better."

He left Holborn, and, passing down the by-streets, made directly for Covent Garden. There he found the market in full vigor, — the carts all seeming to come in at the same time. He peered about in the faces of the drivers and workmen.

"An expression of hope," he said, "or rather of expectation. We have had our bed: they seem as if they were always looking for it. Very odd! Life pulled forward, — breakfast at four, dinner at ten, tea at two. Bed, if you are a Sybarite, about seven; if you are a reveller, at nine. Where is my coffee-woman?"

He came to a stall, where a fat, red-faced woman was lading out cups of coffee to an expectant crowd. He stood on one side, and let the crowd thin, and then humbly advanced.

"A cup of coffee, if you please, ma'am." She poured it out for him.

"Drink it, and go home to bed," she said. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, stayin' out all night this fashion."

"I am only just out of bed," said Venn meekly. "I got out of bed to see you."

"And pray what might you be wanting to see me for, young man? I don't owe you nothing."

"On the contrary, it is I who owe you a great deal," he replied, sitting on the shafts of her coffee cart. "Tell me, my good soul, you were here the night before last?"

"I am here every night."

"Then you remember the young lady who came here?"

"I should think I do remember her, — the pretty lamb."

Venn took her great rough hand in his, and held it.

"She gave you a locket. Have you got it with you?"

"Yes, it's in my pocket. Wait a bit, — wait a bit. Here it is. What do you want with the locket?"

"She has sent me to buy the locket back," he replied, "and to find out where you live. She is with her friends now. You must not ask any thing about her, — why she was out alone; but she is with her own friends, — those who love her. She is ill too, — God help her!"

"Amen," said the woman, "and good she was, I swear."

"As good as any saint. See, give me the locket, and tell me where you live. She shall come soon to see you herself. And here is the price of the locket."

He laid five pounds in her hand. The woman looked at the gold, — it was as much as ever she had had in her possession, all at once, — and then held out her hand again.

"If she's poor, take it back, I don't want it, — the Lord love her! If she's rich, I'll keep it for the childer."

"I am rich," said Venn, "because I have her back. Keep the money. And now tell me where you live."

She shook her head again, and turned away.

"I can't go to bed," he said. "I've had my breakfast too: what time shall I want lunch, I wonder? Where am I to go now?"

It was not quite six o'clock. He strolled along the streets, making mental observations, watching how the traffic began and how it slowly increased. Then he went on the Embankment.

"I have never yet seen the rosy-fingered dawn. Let us contemplate one of Nature's grandest phenomena."

A dense fog came rolling up with the

break of day, and there was nothing to see at all.

"I am disappointed," he said to himself. "From the description of that lying tribe, the poets, I had expected a very different thing. Alas! one by one the illusions of life die away. Let us go and look after our patient."

The worst was passed; and though Laura was hanging between life and death, the balance of youth and strength was in her favor.

After a day or two, they allowed Venn to enter the sick room and help to nurse. Never had patient a nurse more careful and attentive. In the morning, when Mary went to rehearsal, and in the evening, when she went to the theatre, he took her place, and watched the spark of life slowly growing again into a flame. She was light-headed still, and in her unconscious prattling revealed all the innocent secrets of her life. What revelations those are of sick men in the ears of mothers and sisters who have thought them spotless!

Venn learned all. He heard her plead with her husband for permission to tell himself, to write, to try and see him. He saw how, through it all, he himself lay at her heart; and, lastly, he heard from her lips the real and true story of the last cruel blow that drove her out into the street. What could he do to this man? How madden him with remorse? How drive him and lash him with a scourge of scorpions?

One morning he found her sitting up, half-dressed, weak and feeble, but restored to her right mind. Then Hartley Venn did a thing he had not done for nearly thirty years, — you so easily get out of the habit at Eton, — he knelt down by the bedside, her hand in his, and thanked God aloud for his great mercy.

"When I get well again, Mr. Venn," whispered Lollie, "we will go to church together, will we not?"

Then he sat down by her while she told him all the story again, till the tears ran down both their cheeks; for Hartley Venn was but a great, soft-hearted baby, and showed his feelings in a manner quite unknown to the higher circles.

"But what are we to do with you, Lollie?" he asked, when he had told all his news, — how Mrs. Peck was gone, and there was no house anywhere for her. "You could not possibly have gone to live with your old grandmother any more. What shall we do for you?"

"I don't know, Mr. Venn. Do something for Mary. See how good she has been."

"Mary don't want any thing, child. When she does she knows where to go for help."

Then he told her all about the coffee woman.

"I will take you to see her," he said, "as soon as you are well. Here is your locket, my dear, back again. We are to go in the day-time, and I am to prepare her for your visit first. But what am I to do with you? Stay. I will go and ask Sukey? She always knows what ought to be done."

It was really a serious question. What was he to do with her? He might get her lodgings. But then his own visits would have to be few, so as to prevent talk. He might take a house for her, though that hardly seemed the best thing. But as he walked along to Woburn Place, a brilliant thought flashed across him. Sukey should take her. A comfortable house, the care of a lady, surrounding circumstances not only new, but new enough to have a charm, and a life beyond the reach of any malicious tongues. Nothing could be better. But, then, Sukey might object. He smoothed his face into its sweetest lines. He would diplommatize.

Sukey was in a state of great nervous excitement, in consequence of having been excommunicated. She was of High Church proclivities, and loved, in moderation, the exercise of those observances appointed by her advisers. Naturally, too, she was fond of the society of her clergyman, a gentleman who held rigid views as to fasting and feasting, observing the periods of the former courageously, — but with grief and pain, — and the latter with undisguised joy. Both states of feeling he regarded as conducive to a sound spiritual state. And so far he was followed by Miss Venn, who hated a vegetable diet as much as she loved a good dinner. In an evil hour, having been presented with an Angola cat, she christened it St. Cyril. Her director, on discovering this piece of levity, treated it as an offence quite beyond the venial sins common among mankind, and not only ordered her to change the name to Tom, but also enjoined as a penance an octave of cabbage. At this tyranny her whole soul revolted, and she flew into open rebellion; going over to the enemy's camp, a neighboring Low Church establishment, where as yet no surplice was flaunted in the pulpit, the Psalms were read, and the service finely rendered.

Thereupon she was excommunicated.

CHAPTER XXIX.

VENN, on the following morning, called upon his sister.

She burst forth with all her tale of trouble as soon as she saw him. Hartley judiciously gave her the reins, only occasionally murmuring sympathetically.

"Why, Sukey," he said, when she had quite finished, "you can do nothing better than persist. It is the most outrageous tyranny. And such a beautiful animal too! St. Cyril, come here. Sh—tsh! A lovely cat."

"I thought you hated cats, Hartley."

"As a rule, I do, but not such a superb creature as this. St. Cyril, — what a beautiful name for a cat! Suggestive of howlings on the chimney-tops, — I mean, of purrings on the hearth-rug. My dear sister, you have a genius for giving names. When I was a child — when we were children together — you used to call me Billabelub for short, I remember well."

Sukey began to purr too, falling into the trap baited by flattery, as innocently as any creature of the forest.

"I think I chose a good name, in spite of Mr. De Vere. Take a glass of wine, Hartley, and a biscuit. Why do you call her so seldom?"

"The sherry, by all means."

He poured out two glasses.

"Hartley, you know I never take wine in the morning."

"As it is poured out, you may as well drink it: besides, it will do you good."

She drank it, and appeared to like it.

"But I came to tell you some good news, Sukey," he went on, seeing that the moment had arrived. "My little girl has come back to me."

Sukey said nothing, but looked up sharply.

"Yes. Her husband has ill-treated her."

"Her husband! She has a husband, then?"

"Sukey! Why, how else should she have left me?"

This was a facer. Hartley followed up the advantage.

"Her husband, it appears" —

"Who is her husband, Hartley?"

"Mr. Philip Durnford, lieutenant in the —th Regiment, cousin of Arthur Durnford, whose father used to be a pupil at the rectory. You remember him thirty years ago?"

"My dear brother. As if I could remember any thing so long ago as that."

"True, I forgot. Philip Durnford, I am sorry to say, is not a good man. He made

her conceal the marriage, destroyed the letters she wrote to me, forbade her writing any more, and at last ruined himself, and turned her out of doors. Lollie has had a hard time, Sukey."

"Where is she now?"

"She had nowhere to go, wandered about trying to find me in my chambers, kept on missing me, and at last was picked up by a girl whom she befriended two or three years ago, who took her in like a Samaritan, and we nursed her through a fortnight of dangerous illness. She is still almost too weak to be moved."

"You must see her husband at once."

"I think not."

"Then, where can she go? Hartley, you must not begin that old business of having her up in your chambers."

"No, certainly not — that must be put a stop to. I have thought it over. She must go, Sukey" — here he became very impressive — "she must go to the house of some lady, a little, but not too much, older than herself, of a kind and affectionate disposition — my child is dreadfully broken and weak, Sukey — where her wounds may be healed, and we can teach her to forget some of her troubles; where she will have no reproaches, no worries, no hard words."

"Where will you find her such a guardian?"

"Where? Here, Sukey, here," — he took her fat little hands in his, — "here, my dear. I know no other woman so good and kind as yourself, and no house which will so entirely fulfil all the conditions as your own."

"Mine? Oh, goodness gracious!"

"Yours, Sukey. For there is, I am quite sure, no one in the world whose heart is so soft and whose house is so comfortable as yours."

She sat silent.

"You know Lollie too. It is not as if you were strangers. Remember how you used to kiss her when she was quite a little thing."

"I do," said Sukey. "The child's lips were always sticky with jam."

"They were; and it shows," said Hartley, "the kindness of your heart to treasure up this trifling circumstance. Women alone know how to touch the chords of feeling. She was always extravagantly fond of jam. I remember, too, how you used to spread it for her, on bread and butter, careful not to give her too much butter for fear of biliousness. The old days, Sukey, the old days!"

He was silent, as if overcome. Then he went on, —

"And it is really kind — more kind than I know how to thank you for — to accede

at once to my suggestion. I feel as if it came from you. Believe me, sister, I am very grateful."

He kissed her forehead; and the caress, so exceedingly rare from her brother, brought a glow of conscious benevolence to Sukey's cheeks. She almost felt as if she had really suggested the step. Then her heart sank again.

"Well, you know, my dear Hartley, I am the last person in the world to think of my own comfort."

"You are, indeed, Sukey," he murmured with a glance at the sherry, "the very last. Always self-denying."

"But what will Anne think?"

Hartley rang the bell, and Anne appeared.

"My sister, Anne,—upon my word, Anne, you are getting younger every day,—wants to take, for a little while, a young lady into the house. Mrs. Durnford, who is unhappily separated from her husband. You remember her,—my ward, Miss Colingwood, that was; but she is a little afraid that it will put you out."

Anne looked troubled.

"Not a young lady who will give trouble or any extra work, but one who wants a comfortable place, and thoughtful people like yourself about her."

"If Miss Venn wants it," said Anne.

"Of course she wants it."

"Then I'm not the one to make objections; and I'm sure the house wants a little brightening up. And you never coming in but once in three months, Mr. Hartley."

"I shall come every day now, Anne; but haven't you got Mr. De Vere?"

This was the clergyman with whom Anne did not hold.

"Mr. De Vere, indeed!" and Anne retreated.

"Then we will lose no time," said Hartley. "I don't think you could have her to-morrow; but the day after, perhaps."

"The day after? O Hartley! will she be wanting gayety and fuss, and every thing?"

"Lollie? My dear Sukey, she wants quiet; but, would it not be a nice thing—a graceful thing—if you would bring her here yourself?"

"If you prefer it, Hartley. Where is she?"

"Where she has been for the last three weeks. With Mary."

"Mary has got a surname, I suppose. Pray, what is the profession of Mary?"

"Mary—I mean, Mrs. Smith, whose—ahem! whose husband has gone to—

to?"

"Where is he gone to?"

"How should I know where he is gone

to?" replied Hartley, a little irritably, for he did not like being off the rails of truth. "Gone to Abraham's bosom, I suppose. So Mrs. Smith, you know, dances at the theatre, and supports her child in a creditable way."

"Now, Hartley, I will not—the granddaughter of a Bishop, and all—go to the lodgings of a dancing person."

Hartley repressed an inclination to refer to the ancestral glue manufactory, and only meekly replied that there was no need.

"Bring Laura to your chambers the day after to-morrow," said Sukey, "and I will come and fetch her."

"Do, Sukey, come to breakfast,—kiddneys, sister. You shall take her away afterwards in a cab. You will be kind to her, Sukey?"

"Of course I will. Oh, dear! there is nothing but trouble. Now we shall have to make things ready. Well, go away now, Hartley: you will only be in the way. I will come at ten."

Two days afterwards Hartley brought his ward back again to the old chambers. Mary hugged and kissed her; but when Laura promised to call and see her soon, she only shook her head, and said it was better not, and began to cry; and then she went back to her room again, and found it cheerless and dreary indeed.

Hartley helped Laura up stairs, and installed her in her old place, the old chair by the fire.

"It looks like what it used to be, Lollie," he said; "but it is not. It never can be again."

"Ah, no! It never can be again. My fault, my fault."

"Never again, never again. The waters are troubled, dear, and we shall be long in getting them clear. But think no more of the past. You are always my little girl, remember; and if you were dear to me before, Lollie, when you were but a child, you are doubly dear now, when you come back in your sorrow and trouble. There are to be no more lessons and talks and walks. I must not see you very often, and never here, because people might talk. But never doubt, my child, that I love you."

He kissed her forehead, and caressed her face in his old calm way, while the tears were standing in his eyes. She dropped her face in her hands, and wept unrestrainedly.

Miss Venn appeared at this juncture. She had walked to Gray's Inn, making up her mind to be kind, but yet severe; for elopement should always be visited by coldness of manner, at least. Besides, meditation of forty-eight hours had revealed to

her, the cunning manner in which her brother had entrapped her into a generosity of which she half repented.

But at sight of her brother's sorrow, and the weak, wasted figure in the chair, her resolution gave way; and almost before she had got the girl well in her fat motherly arms, she was crying over her, and kissing her, with a vehemence which did infinite credit to the family.

Hartley left them, and presently returned with the kidneys, cooked in his bedroom. Nobody could do kidneys so well as Hartley, or brew such splendid coffee; and sympathy brings its own reward in the shape of appetite.

After this she took Lollie away with her, laid her on the sofa, and, with Anne, made much of her.

I have only to add that the public appearance of Laura, and the way in which she was carried off by Miss Venn, entirely re-established her in the eyes of the Gray's Inn functionaries, and effectually drowned the voices of those who had said evil things about her disappearance.

CHAPTER XXX.

VENN went with a troubled mind to find Arthur Durnford. He knew nothing as yet of his changed fortunes, and had, indeed, only heard of Philip as a cousin of whom Arthur spoke little.

"Arthur," he said, shaking his hand, "something has happened to me."

"A great deal has happened to me," said Arthur, laughing; "but I hope your accident is not so serious as mine. It's a long story; but you shall have it."

He told all, from the very beginning.

"I gave up the fortune at once," he said simply, "because it seemed to me clear and beyond any dispute that my father was actually married to this girl, who must have died in Europe before he married again, and when Philip was a year old. He is only two years older than myself. I might have fought the case, my lawyer said; but it would have been at the cost of publishing my father's early history, perhaps raking up old scandals,—all sorts of things. This I couldn't do; and Philip, who is the most generous man alive, insisted on my having double the sum which my father had given him. You see, my father never intended him to be his heir. Of that I am quite certain. On the other hand, by his will, Philip is the heir. And the decision of the case means legitimacy to him."

"I see," said Venn; "I see. Nevertheless, I do not believe. This man who sup-

plies the proofs—I will tell you something about him directly."

"You can tell me very little that I do not know already. That MacIntyre is a scoundrel, an unscrupulous man, bound by no laws of honor, religion, or morality, I know already,—partly from his own confession."

"He sold his proofs, I suppose?"

"I suppose so. I have not asked Philip what he asked or got for them."

"Tell me his address, if you know it."

"I know the street, but not the number. He is in lodgings in Keppel Street, Russell Square."

"Keppel Street? I know it. Yes—Keppel Street."

Over his face there stole a look of thankfulness, expressed by the movement of his sensitive lips. His color rose just a little, but he was outwardly calm.

"You want to see him?"

"I think I shall probably call upon him to-day."

"But what has happened to you, Venn? I am so full of my own troubles that I am selfish, and forget yours."

"Mine are not all troubles, Arthur. My little girl has been restored to me."

Arthur did not dare say a word. He was afraid to ask the question that rose to his lips.

"Spotless, thank God, and pure. You shall learn presently how. But tell me first about this new-found brother of yours."

"What about him?"

"Is he, for instance, a man of honor?"

"I would stake my own upon Philip's honor."

"And truth?"

"Surely, my dear Venn, you have nothing to say or to suspect against Philip, have you?"

"And a man, you think, of generous leanings, of chivalrous feeling, of lofty sentiments, of— Well, Arthur, I am going to give you a greater shock than the loss of your fortune. Listen to me. I used to tell my child, in a thoughtless way, that I should like, above all things, to see her married to a gentleman. She, my innocent and ignorant Lollie, brought up with me and me only, knew nothing about love, marriage, any thing else that is common and practical. She and I lived among our books, and fed our minds on the words of old writers. Well"—he paused for a moment. "One night, when she left me, she was insulted in the street. A gentleman came to her help. Of all this she told me. She did not tell me the rest, because he persuaded her not to,—that he met her again, that he told her he loved her, and begged her to marry him. She thought it would please me. She accepted

him to please me. She kept silent to please me. You think it is impossible? You do not know how I had kept the girl from knowing the world and its wickedness. The day before the marriage, she told me she had a secret, and wanted to tell it me. I, though I saw her distress, blinded by my own ignorant conceit, bade her keep her secret, and refused to hear it. The next day she was privately married by a Scotch clergyman—living, Arthur, in Keppel Street."

"Heavens, Venn! Do you mean MacIntyre? It was not Philip—it could not be Philip."

"Was the man ever a Scotch clergyman?"

"Who can know? He is a mass of lies. He would say so for his own purposes, whether he was or not."

"And yet you allowed him to take your fortune from you!"

"Not on his own evidence, Venn; but go on."

"The man who married Lollie took her to Normandy with him. Before leaving the house in Keppel Street, Lollie wrote me a note, telling all. MacIntyre promised to take it himself to Gray's Inn. *He never did.* When they got to Normandy, she wrote me a long letter,—I can fancy what my little girl would say to me in it. Her husband took the letter to the post. *It never came.* She waited a week, and then she wrote again. Her husband took the letter to the post. The second letter *never came.* Then her husband brought her back to England, put her in a small house near London, and forbade her to write to me any more. You understand so much."

"It cannot be Philip," Arthur said.

"Wait. There is more. This was in June; it is now November. For nearly five months, then, she lived there. She was absolutely alone the whole time. Her husband left her in the morning, and usually came home at night. She dined alone, sat alone, had no visitors, no companions. All the time he was, as I gather, betting on horse-racing, gambling,—losing money every day. Once or twice Mr. MacIntyre came to see her. Once her husband had a large party of men in the house. Then he sent her to her own room, and there kept her awake all night, singing and laughing. My little Lollie! When I think of it all, Arthur, I feel half mad! Wait, don't speak yet: there is more. It is now ten days ago. He came home very late; he rose at mid-day; he cursed at the breakfast; and then, without a word of regret, without a word to soften the blow, he turned upon his wife, told her that he was a ruined man, that he had nothing left at

all, that she must leave him, because they never had been married at all. What do you think of that man, Arthur Durnford?"

"Finish your story."

"She left him,—left him with nothing but what she had when she married him; and all that night, that bitter, wretched, dismal night, with the wild wind and rain driving in her face, the poor girl wandered, wandered in the streets. Think of it, Arthur,—think of it! My little girl walked about the streets all night long,—never stopped, never sat down, never ate or drank. All night long! do you know what that means? The rain beating upon her, her wet clothes clinging to her, her brain confused and troubled, stupid with suffering; while the hours went on, one after the other, creeping for her, flying for us. Good God! and I in my warm bed, asleep, unthinking. My dear, my little darling! If I only had but known!"

He was standing over Arthur, as the latter sat looking at him with pained and troubled face. Venn's eyes were heavy with those tears which do not fall, and his voice was shaken as he spoke.

"There is more still, Arthur. She wandered so,—where, she does not know. In the morning a woman, a humble child of Samaria, gave her a cup of coffee. I have found that giver of the cup of coffee, Arthur. Then she thinks she sat down, somewhere, just before it grew light; and then she began to wander again. From noon till noon, twenty-four hours of walking in the streets. She was to have been,—she might have been,—Arthur, a mother. Think of it. Then, if you like it put that way, God was good to her, and sent in her path a girl, a poor starving girl, whom I had helped two years before at Lollie's own prayer,—her own prayer, mind, not any charitable act,—when she was ignorant of what the girl had done, what it meant, and why her father had turned her away. Mary found her wandering down the street, and took her home, fainting and weary to death, not knowing what was being done to her. Then she sent to me. Lollie has been ill since: that was to be expected. At death's door: that, too, was to be expected.

"Now you know, Arthur, what has happened to me. Is my little girl blameless?"

"Surely, yes, Venn."

"And the man, Arthur,—what is to be done with the man? I made her tell me his name, on the promise that I would not harm him. To keep that promise, it is necessary that I should not see him; but what is to be done with the man, I say? How can we make him feel what he has done? Is there any way—any way?"

I see none. A man whose sense of honor is so delicate that you would exchange it for your own; who is the soul of truth, of honor, of nobility; who is—alas! alas! my friend—your brother Philip.”

Then Venn took up his hat.

“I must go now,” he said. “Shake hands, Arthur. Tell me again you think my little girl is pure and spotless.”

“Before God, I think so,” said Arthur. “She is my sister.”

“Thank you, friend. You shall see her. Now I go. I am bound on a pleasanter journey than when I came here. I am going to pay a little visit. Yes, you are quite right, I am going to Keppel Street. I am going to see the Scotch clergyman.”

He put on his hat, and went away.

He had not been gone half an hour before Philip himself came, radiant, happy, light-hearted. Some sinners are so. Then wise men say they live in Fools’ Paradise. Perhaps; but I do not pretend to solve these difficulties. My own idea is that when a man has done such things as ought to take away all his self-respect, there is always some of it left so long as things are not found out. You can hardly expect self-respect in a gentleman who has stood in the dock, for instance, and heard the judge pronouncing sentence upon him. But the jury, how eminently self-respectful they are! One or two even, perhaps, of these might fairly stand side by side with the criminal. So, too,—but I am plagiarizing from Venn’s essay, “On Being Found Out;” and, as the world will perhaps get this work some day, I must stop.

Arthur looked the criminal certainly; for he flushed scarlet, stammered, and refused to notice the hand that Philip held out.

“I have heard something, Philip.”

“It must be something desperately solemn, then,” said his brother. “Is it any thing new about the—the late business of ours?”

“Nothing. It is much worse than that. Mr. Hartley Venn has been here.”

Philip had, for the moment, utterly forgotten Venn’s existence. He, too, changed color.

“Well?”

“The rest you know, I suppose. Your wife”—

“Come, come, Arthur, be reasonable.”

“I am reasonable. I say your wife—Good heavens, sir! what makes a woman a wife? What are the laws of the country to the laws of honor, honesty, truth? Did you not pledge your faith to her? Did you not?”—

“Arthur, I will not be questioned.”

“Answer me, then, one question. You

have done—you, Philip, you—you have done all that Venn has told me. Learn that your wife, my *sister-in-law*, is lying ill. She has been close to dying. You will, at least, make her your wife in the eyes of the law?”

“Oh, dear, no!” said Philip lightly. “I do not justify myself, my dear fellow. Of course it is extremely wicked and improper. I am very sorry to hear about her illness. Tell Mr. Venn that no money arrangement that is at all reasonable will be objected to—that”—

“Philip, stop—I won’t hear it.”

“Won’t hear what? You were not born yesterday, I suppose, Arthur? You know that such things are done every day. We all do them.”

“We all?”

“Yes—we all. Bah! the girl will get over it in a month.”

“And this man is my own brother,” said Arthur, recoiling—“is my own brother!”

Philip’s face grew cloudy. There was no longer any thing in him but the animal.

“Let us have no more of this nonsense,” he said. “Tell this man Venn that he may do what he likes, and go to the devil. And as for you, Arthur”—

“Philip, you are a villain. Leave my room. Never speak to me again. Never come here. Let me never see your face any more. We have been a family of gentlemen for generations; and now you are our representative! It is shameful—it is dreadful!”

Philip left him. As he opened the door, he turned and said,—

“When you apologize to me for this language, you may, perhaps, expect to see me again. Till then, never.”

It was a poor way of getting off the stage; and Philip afterwards reflected that he might have finished with at least more fire and effect if he had gone off swearing; but the best things always occur to us too late to put them into practice.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“It is indeed a dreadful story,” said Madeleine, when Arthur told her.

“What is to be done? Advise me, Madeleine.”

“Who can advise? Mr. Venn’s plan of assuming the marriage to be legal, without asking any questions, and letting Philip alone altogether, seems the best; unless, which I very much doubt, we can bring your brother to a better frame of mind. You, of course, have done as much

mischief as was possible. Men are always so violent."

"I told him he was a villain," said Arthur. "It is true. I have never read, never heard, of baser or more cold-blooded treachery."

"Let me go and see Philip," said Madeleine.

She went at once to the house at Nottingham Hill. It was now dismantled; for Philip had sent away every thing but the furniture of the two rooms in which he lived. There was no one in the place but himself and an old woman. He had never been up stairs to the room which had been Laura's since she left him.

Madeleine found him, unshaven, in a dressing-gown, smoking a pipe, in gloomy disorder. It was in the afternoon. On the table was an empty soda-water bottle, an empty tumbler, and a brandy bottle.

Philip, surprised to see her, made some sort of apology for the general disorder, and, putting aside his pipe, brushed the hair back from his forehead, and waited to hear what she would say.

She began by abusing him for living in such a mess.

"Why do you do it?" she asked. "Brandy and soda in the daytime—not dressed—rooms in the most dreadful litter. Philip, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

He only groaned impatiently.

"Is that all you have come to see me for, Madeleine? Do not worry about the rooms and me. I've got something else to think of besides the disorder of my rooms. You shall blow up the old woman if you like. She is within hail,—probably sitting with her heels under the grate and her head in the coal-scuttle."

"I have a great deal more to say, Philip. First of all, do you know that I am going to be your sister? I am to marry Arthur."

"Arthur is a happy man, Madeleine. I envy him; but he always had all the luck."

"Don't call it luck, Phil. But we shall see a great deal more of you, shall we not, when we are married?"

"No—a great deal less. I have quarrelled with Arthur."

"I know, I know. But hasty words may be recalled; and—and hasty actions may be repaired, Phil, may they not?"

"If they could be undone, it would be worth talking about. Do not beat about the bush, Madeleine. I suppose you know all about that girl, and are come here to talk to me, and pitch into me. Well, go on. I cannot help what you say."

"Indeed, I do not come to pitch into you, as you call it, at all. I cannot bear to

think that my own brother, my husband's brother, could do this thing in cold blood. Do tell me something."

Philip was silent for a while.

"I will tell you the exact truth, Madeleine. You may call it excuse or defence, or any thing else you like. It shall be the exact truth, mind. I would tell no other living soul. I care nothing for what the world says; but I care something for what you think."

"You cannot understand the nature of a man. You will not comprehend me when I tell you that I was devoured with love for this girl. There was nothing I could not have done—nothing, mind—to get possession of her. There came a time when I had to marry her on a certain day or not at all. I got the special license, but forgot all about speaking to any clergyman till it was too late. Then MacIntyre pretended that he could marry us; and we were married. A fortnight ago, I found myself a ruined man. Worse than ruined, for I had not money to meet my debts of honor. I was on the point of being disgraced. I was maddened by my difficulties. She understood nothing of them, never entered into my pursuits, cared nothing for my life. I was maddened by her calmness. Then I lost command of myself, and told her—what, mind, I did not know till after—that the marriage was a mock one, and—and— Well, you know the rest. That is all."

"And your love for her, Philip?"

"My love? Gone—gone a long time ago. It was never more than a passing fancy, and all this business of the last fortnight put her out of my head entirely until Arthur reminded me of her. She is gone to her friend, guardian—what is it?—a Mr. Venn, who lives in chambers, and enacts the part of the universal philanthropist. I only keep on in this house, where it is torture to me to live, in order that he may not say I ran away from him. Here I am, and here I shall stay to face him—not to excuse myself, you understand. I stoop to defend my life to you alone."

"Philip, you are not so bad as he thinks; but I may tell you at once that he will not come. When Laura told him your name, she made him at the same time promise to do you no harm,—to take no revenge on you."

"I am not afraid of that, Madeleine."

"No; but you need stay here no longer. She has gone for the present to live with Miss Venn. I am going to call upon her myself. I am anxious to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Durnford."

"Mrs. Durnford!"

"I am told that she is a young lady,

very beautiful, very carefully educated, most sweet-tempered and affectionate."

"She is all that, Madeleine; but she never loved me. She was always pining after Mr. Venn. That reminds me—I told you I would give you the exact truth. I destroyed the letters that she wrote to him, without telling her. That was because I was jealous of him. I would have no man in her heart except myself. I am extremely sorry I did that, because it was an error of judgment, as well as a"—

"A wrong act, Phil, was it not?"

"It was, Madeleine,—a dishonorable thing. Have I abased myself enough before you, or do you want more of the confessions of a man about town? I have lots more relating to other events in a riotous career. Would you like to hear them? By Jove! I wonder if the prodigal son ever beguiled the winter evenings, sitting round the fire, with tales of the things he had done? The name of the other son is not given in the original narrative, but I believe it was Arthur."

"No, Philip. I want no more confessions. I want an act of reparation. See, Phil," she pleaded, "God only allows us to be happy in being good. Be good, my brother."

"I can't, Madeleine. I'm much too far gone."

"Then undo the evil you have done."

"How can that be?"

"I know you better than all the rest of them, Phil. I know that you are easily influenced, that you act without thinking, that you are easily moved, that your heart is not selfish. I know that you are repentant in spite of your light words. But think of the girl, Phil."

"I do think of her. I think of her day and night. I cannot sleep. I cannot do any thing. She is always before my eyes."

"Then marry her, and take her back, if she would come."

"She would not, Madeleine. There was a look in her eyes when she left me that told me all was over. No woman can have that expression in her face, and ever come back to love and confidence. She would never come back."

"Then marry her, Phil. In the eyes of the law, at least, let her be your wife."

Philip was silent.

"I love her no longer," he said. "There can be no longer any question of love between us. But see, you shall do with me what you will, Madeleine. Ask me any thing for Laura, and you shall have it. Keep my story,—keep what I have told you to yourself. Do not even tell it to Arthur."

"Philip, you promise?"

"I promise, Madeleine. Give me your hand. I swear by your hand, because there is nothing I know so sacred, that I will obey you in all things as regards Laura."

He kissed her fingers. Over his mobile countenance there passed the old expression of nobility, as if it had come back to settle there for good.

"And Arthur?" Madeleine began.

The bright look vanished.

"Arthur has used words to me—I have used words to Arthur—which can never be forgotten. Tell him so. I desire to meet him no more. Farewell, Madeleine. Write and tell me what I am to do; and I will do it. And let us part now, never to meet again. I do not know what I shall do with my future. Make ducks and drakes of it, I suppose. But I shall be out of my path. I shall be happy enough. The slopes that lead to Avernus are broad and pleasant. You may hear us singing as we go down them—you may see us dancing. Oh, it is a pleasant life, the life I am going to lead. Good-by, Madeleine."

She took his hand, his face was clouded and moody; and then, grateful for the promise she had got, she left him, and drove back to her own house.

And the same day she, with Arthur, made a formal call upon Miss Venn. Sukey, little accustomed to visitors who came in their own carriage, was not above being flattered.

"We are not come wholly for the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Venn," said Madeleine. "I want to make the acquaintance of my future sister-in-law, Mrs. Durnford."

"Laura?" She looked curiously at Madeleine, but it was Arthur who was blushing. "Laura? She is in her own room. Would you like to go up and see her?"

"If I might. You are too kind, dear Miss Venn. May I go up by myself, without being announced?"

Sukey took her to the door, and left her. Madeleine gently opened it.

On the sofa by the fire, wrapped in a dressing-gown, lay a fair young girl, thin, pale, wasted. Her head was lying among the pillows; and she was asleep.

Madeleine bent over her, and kissed her.

She opened her eyes. She saw a tall and queenly woman in silks and sealskin, and half rose.

"Don't move, my dear," said Madeleine: "let me kiss you. I am to make your acquaintance. Shall I tell you who I am? I am Madeleine de Villeroy; and I used to know your husband when he was quite a boy. Now I am going to marry your husband's brother; and we shall be sisters. My child, you shall be made happy again. We shall all love you."

"My husband? He said — he said" —

"Forget what he said, my darling, — forget all that he said, and, if you can, forgive him. Now, sit up, and let us talk."

She sat with her for a quarter of an hour, and then went away, promising to call again soon.

In the drawing-room there was rigid discomfort. For Sukey, the moment she got back, had seized the bull by the horns, and attacked Arthur.

"You are the brother of Mr. Philip Durnford?" she began. "You are the brother of a bad man, — a bad man, Mr. Arthur Durnford. Tell him not to come to this house, for I won't have him. Remember that!" —

"Indeed, Miss Venn, he will not come here."

"If he does, Anne will take the tongs to him — I know she will. She did that much to a policeman in the kitchen. Tell him not to come."

"My brother and I, Miss Venn, are not on speaking terms at present."

"Indeed. I'm glad to hear it, — I am very glad to hear it."

Then they both relapsed into silence; and Sukey glared at poor Arthur, by way of conveying a lesson in virtue, till he nearly fell off the chair.

Madeleine relieved them; and, after asking Sukey's permission to come again, took away the unfortunate Arthur.

"Why didn't you ring for the sherry, miss?" asked Anne, presently coming up stairs.

"I gave it him. Anne — I gave it him well." Sukey shook her head virulently. "That was Laura's husband's brother. I told him if his precious brother came here you'd go at him — with the tongs, I said."

"So I would — so I would," said Anne.

"Sherry, indeed! They are always wanting to drink. We don't drink glasses of sherry all day. I dare say it was sherry drove that abandoned brother of his to bad courses. I hope, for that sweet girl's sake, he isn't like his brother. He doesn't look it, Anne; but you never can tell. They are all alike, — waste, drink, eat, and devour. Why isn't the world peopled with nothing but women?"

"Deed, then, miss," replied Anne, "the end of the world wouldn't be very far off."

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. MACINTYRE is sitting in his easy-chair at home, in those respectable lodgings of his in Keppel Street. He is meditating on the good fortune that has come

to him. Perhaps he is too much inclined to attribute his success to merit rather than fortune; but in this we may pardon him. It is but two o'clock in the day; but a glass of steaming whiskey-toddy is on the table, and a pipe in his mouth. In spite of the many virtues which adorned this great man, I fear that the love of material comfort caused him sometimes to anticipate the evening, the legitimate season of comfort.

Nursing his leg, and watching the wreaths of smoke curling over his head, he meditated; and, if his thoughts had taken words, they would have been much as follows: —

"After all my shipwrecks, behold a haven. I have been in prison. I have been scourged by schoolboys. I have been tried for embezzlement. I have starved in the streets of London. I have been usher, preacher, missionary, tutor, retailer, sandwich man. I have, at last, found the road to fortune; not by honest means, but by lies and villainies, by practising on the honor of others. I have five thousand pounds in the bank, eleven pounds ten shillings and threepence in my pocket. Nothing can hurt me now; nothing can annoy me but ill-health and the infirmities of age. I have ten years, at least, of life before me yet. I shall go back to my own people. The Baillie will hardly refuse to receive me now that I have money. I shall be respected and respectable. 'Honesty is the best policy!' Bah! it is the maxim of the successful. I know better. Cleverness is the best policy. Scheme, plunder, purloin, cheat, and devise. When your fortune is made, hold out your clean white hands, and say 'Christian brethren, I am a living example that honesty is the best policy.' I shall join this band; and, at the kirk on the sawbath, and among my folk on week days, I shall be a living sermon to the young of the advantages of honesty. Respected and respectable, Alexander MacIntyre, retire upon your modest gains, and be happy."

Just then a knock was heard at the door.

The visitor was no other than Hartley Venn. He had strolled leisurely from Arthur's lodgings, smoking all the way, with a smile of immeasurable content, and a sweet emotion of anticipation in his heart. Having once ascertained the address of the philosopher, he lost no time in making his way to the street. On the way he stopped at a shop, and bought a gutta-percha whip, choosing one of considerable weight, yet pliant and elastic.

"This," he said to the shopman, "would curl well round the legs, in tender places, I should think?"

"I should think it would," said the man.

"Yes; and raise great weals where there was plenty of flesh, I should say. Thank you. Good-morning. It will suit me very well."

He poised the instrument in his hand, and walked along. When he got to Keppel Street, he showed his knowledge of human nature by going to the nearest public-house, and asking for Mr. MacIntyre's number. The potboy knew it.

Hartley presented himself unannounced, and, with a bow of great ceremony, — one of those Oriental salutations which were reserved for great occasions: he had not used it since his last interview with the master of his college.

"I believe I have the honor of addressing Mr. Alexander MacIntyre," he began.

The tutor confessed to owning the name, and began to feel a little uneasy. However, he asked his visitor to take a chair.

"Thank you — no, Mr. MacIntyre. Shall we say the Reverend Alexander MacIntyre?"

"No."

"We will not. The business I have to transact will not detain me long, and will be better done standing. You are, I believe, acquainted with Philip Durnford?"

"I am. May I ask?"

"Presently, presently. You are likewise acquainted with Mrs. Philip Durnford?"

It was MacIntyre's chance, but he neglected it.

"The young person calling herself Mrs. Philip Durnford has, I believe, run away from him."

Venn gave a start, but restrained himself.

"One more question. You have often, I doubt not, reflected on the wisdom of that sentence of Horace, which might be inspired were it not the result of a world's experience. In that sense, too, you would perhaps urge, and very justly, that it might be considered as divine, since experience is a form of revelation. I offer you a paraphrase, perhaps too alliterative, —

'Lightly the sinner leaps along the way,
Lamely limps after he who bears the cane;
Yet, soon or late, there comes the fatal day
When stick meets back, and joy is drowned by pain.'

"Go on, sir," said Mr. MacIntyre, seriously alarmed, "and let me know your business. Who are you? What have you to do with me? I have never set my eyes on you before."

"Do not let us precipitate matters. Patience, Mr. MacIntyre, patience. Although you have not seen me, you have,

perhaps, heard of me from Mrs. Philip Durnford. I am her guardian. My name, sir, is Hartley Venn."

The philosopher, among whose prominent defects was a want of physical courage, fell back in his chair, and began to perspire at the nose.

"Having learned from my ward the facts of the case, — that you exercised practices undoubtedly your legal right in Scotland, and married her to Durnford by a special license in this very room; also, that you suppressed the letter she sent me; and, further, that you have been the prime agent and adviser in the whole of the business, — it was but natural that I should desire to make your acquaintance. In fact," he added, with a winning smile, "I really must confess, that I had imagined your breed to be now totally extinct, gone out with the Regent, and belonging chiefly to the novels of his period. For this mistake I humbly beg permission to apologize. I obtained your address, partly from Arthur Durnford, an admirer of yours, — I wish I could say follower, — and partly from the potboy who supplies your modest wants. I hope you will remember the claim of gratitude which that potboy will henceforth have upon you. I had a struggle in my own mind — *δυσδιάκριτον*; for while I ardently desired to converse with you myself, I had yet a feeling that the — the penalty should be left to some meaner person; but I bore in mind the distinction of rank. You are, I believe, a graduate of some university?"

"Sir, you are addressing a Master of Arts of the University of Aberdeen."

"Aberdeen is honored. I wish we had had you at Cambridge."

Venn took the riding-whip in both hands, passing his fingers up and down tenderly. MacIntyre saw now what was coming, and looked vainly round the room for a means of escape. Before him stood his tormentor. Behind the tormentor was the door. It is cruel, if you are to hang a man, first to stick him on a platform for an hour or so and harangue him; but perhaps, in the cases of lighter punishment, the suspense should be considered a part of the suffering. This was in MacIntyre's mind; but he did not give it utterance, sitting crouched in the chair, looking at the whip with a terrible foreboding.

Venn went on moralizing in a dreadful way, suggesting the confidence of one who knows that his game is fairly caught.

"The chastisement I am about to bestow upon you, Mr. MacIntyre, is ludicrously disproportionate to the offence you have committed. You will reflect upon this afterwards, and laugh. On the highest Christian grounds, I ought, perhaps, to for-

give you; and I dare say I shall, if I know how, after this interview. On the other hand, I have little doubt that the slight horsewhipping I shall give you will be considered by the powers leniently, perhaps even approvingly. Let me for once consider myself an instrument."

He raised his whip above his head. MacIntyre crouched down, with his face in his hands.

"I beg your pardon," said Venn, pausing, "I have something else to say. You will remark that I have passed over the question of disgrace. No disgrace, I imagine, could possibly touch you, unless it were accompanied by severe personal discomfort. It is this curious fact — by the way, do you think it has received the attention it deserves? — which leads me to believe in the material punishments of the next world. You will remark, — I do hope I make myself sufficiently clear, and am not tedious."

"Ye are tedious," groaned the philosopher, looking up.

"I mean, there comes upon a man in the development of a long course of crime and sin — say such a man as yourself — a time when no disgrace can touch him, no dishonor can be felt, no humiliation make him lower than he actually is. He has lost not only all care about the esteem of others, but also all sense of self-respect. He is now all body and mind — no soul. Therefore, Mr. MacIntyre, when a man reaches this stage, on which I imagine that you are yourself standing now, what is left for him? How, I mean, can you get at him? I see no way of attacking his intellect, and there remains then but one way, — this!"

Quick as lightning, with a back stroke of his hand, Venn sent the whip full across MacIntyre's face. He leaped to his feet with a yell of pain and fear, and sprang to the door. But Venn caught him, as he passed, by the collar; and then, first pushing the table aside, so as to have a clear stage, he held him firmly out by the left hand, — Mr. MacIntyre was but a small man, and perfectly unresisting, — and with the right administered a punishment which, if I were Mr. Kingsley, I should call grim and great. Being myself, and not Mr. Kingsley, I describe the thrashing which Mr. Venn administered as at once calm, judicial, and severe. A boatswain would not have laid on the cuts with more judgment and dexterity, so as at once to find out all the tender places, and to get the most out of the simple instrument employed.

But it was interrupted; for, hearing the door open, Venn turned round, and saw a lady standing in the room watching him. He let go his hold, and MacIntyre instant-

ly dropped upon the floor, and lay there curled in a heap.

A lady of middle age, with pale face and abundant black hair, dressed in comely silks. For a moment, Venn thought he knew her face, but dismissed the idea.

"Mr. MacIntyre?" she asked hesitatingly.

"He is here, madam," replied Hartley, indicating with the whip the recumbent mass beneath him.

The lady looked puzzled.

"I am extremely sorry your visit should be so ill-timed," said Hartley politely. "The fact is, you find our friend in the receipt of punishment. His appearance at this moment is not dignified, — not that with which a gentleman would prefer to see a lady in his rooms. Perhaps, if your business is not urgent, you would not mind postponing your call till to-morrow, when he may be able to receive you with more of the outward semblance of self-respect. We have not yet quite finished."

"Don't go," murmured the prostrate sage.

Venn spoke calmly, but there was a hot flush upon his cheeks which spoke of intense excitement.

"Pray, madam, leave us for a few moments together, — I am still in high spirits."

"I prefer ye in low spirits."

This was the voice of MacIntyre, lying still crouched with his face in his hands.

"Really, sir," said the visitor, "I think I ought to remain. Whatever Mr. MacIntyre has done, you have surely punished him enough."

"I think not," said Venn. "As you are apparently a friend, — perhaps a believer in Mr. MacIntyre, — I will tell you what he has done."

He told her, in a few words.

The lady looked troubled.

"The other one, you observe, madam, a young fellow of six and twenty, had still some grains left of morals and principles, — they were sapped by Mr. MacIntyre; he had still the remains of honor, — they were removed by Mr. MacIntyre; he still called himself a gentleman, — he can do so no longer, thanks to Mr. MacIntyre. Do you want to hear more?"

"And the girl, — where is she?"

"She is with me, madam. She is my ward."

"Perhaps, sir, Mr. MacIntyre would get up, if he were assured that there was no more personal violence intended."

Mr. MacIntyre shook a leg to show that he concurred in this proposition, and was prepared to listen to these terms.

"Get up," said Venn sternly.

He slowly rose, his face and hands a livid mass of bruises and weals, and stag-

gered to his feet. His coat was torn. His eyes were staring. His face, where the whip had not marked it, was of a cold, white color. He stood for a moment stupidly gazing at Venn, and then turned to the lady. For a moment he gazed at her indifferently, then curiously, then he stepped forward and stared her in the face; and then he threw up his arms over his head, and would have fallen forward, but Venn caught him, as he cried, —

“Marie!”

They laid him on the floor, and poured cold water on his forehead. Presently he revived and sat up. Then they gave him a glass of brandy, which he drank, and staggered to his feet. But he reeled to and fro, like unto one who goes down upon the sea in a great ship.

“It is Marie,” said the lady. “It is more than five and twenty years since we met last. You were bad then, — you are worse now. Tell me what new villany is this that you have committed?”

“Marie!” he began, but stopped again, and turned to Venn. “Sir, you do not understand. Some day you will be sorry for this outrage upon a respectable clergyman, who cannot retaliate, because his cloth forbids. Let me go and restore myself.”

He slipped into the back room, his bedroom, and they saw him no more. Had they looked out of the window, they might have seen him slip from the door, with a great-coat about him and a carpet-bag in his hand, his face muffled up and his hat over his eyes. He got round the corner, and, calling a cab, drove straight to his bank.

“Can I help you in any way, madam?”

“I called here to ask for the address of a Mr. Philip Durnford.”

“That at least I can procure for you. For Mr. Philip Durnford is none other than the man of whom I have spoken.”

She sat on a chair, and answered nothing for a while.

He, wondering, looked on silent.

“Oh, there must be a mistake! Philip would never do it. O Philip, my son, my son!”

The words seemed extorted by the agony of sharp pain.

“Your son?” cried Hartley.

“Ay, my son. Let the world know it now. Let it be published in all the papers, if they will. My son, my son!”

Then she seemed to regain her composure.

“Sir, you have the face of a gentleman.”

“That must be the bishop’s doing,” murmured Venn, “not the glue-man.”

But she did not hear him.

“You may, perhaps, keep a secret, — not altogether mine. I am Madame de Guy-

on, — yes, the singer. I am a native of Palmiste. Philip Durnford is my son.”

Venn sat down now, feeling as if every thing was going round with him.

And here let me finish off with Mr. MacIntyre, from whom I am loth to part.

His lodgings knew him no more. The things he left behind paid for the rent due. He drove to the city, drew out all his money in drafts on an Edinburgh bank, and went down to Scotland that very night by the limited mail. As soon as his face was restored to its original shape and hue, he went to his native town and took a small house there, after an interview with the Baillie, his cousin, who, finding that he had a large sum to deposit in the bank, received him with cordiality, and even affection.

He lives there still, respected by the town, as is right for one who left the country, and returned with money. He is consulted on all matters of finance, speculation, education, doctrine, morals, and church discipline. He holds views, perhaps, too rigid, and his visitations on minor offences are sometimes more severe than the frailty of the flock can altogether agree with. He is never seen drunk, though it is notorious that he drinks a good many tumblers of toddy every evening. He spends the mornings in his garden, — a pursuit which has always attracted great men in retirement; and on wet days in his study, where he is supposed to be elaborating a grand work on metaphysics. In conversation he is apt to deal too exclusively with principles of an abstract nature; and his friends complain that, considering he has been so great a traveller, he tells so few tales of his own experiences. Palmiste Island he never mentions. As for the story of his life, no one knows it but himself, and no single episode has ever got down to his native town. In all probability he will go on, as he said himself, respected and respectable, till the end, — a living example of the truth of the proverb that “Honesty is the best policy.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MARIE, when she told George Durnford that she had a great voice, spoke less than the truth. She had a magnificent voice; a voice that comes but once or twice a century; a voice that history remembers, and that marks an epoch in the annals of music. With the money that Durnford gave her, she devoted herself to its cultivation. She did not hurry. In Italy she studied long and diligently, until, at the age of six and twenty, she was able to make her first ap-

pearance in London. She had hoped to please her old lover, and interest him in her success; but he answered hardly any of her letters, and only coldly acquiesced in her schemes for the future. For George Durnford's love had long disappeared from his heart: it vanished when he married Adrienne. He looked on poor Marie as a living witness of a time that he repented. He wanted, having assured her against poverty, neither to hear from her nor to see her again. He was fated not to see her; and when she wrote to him, telling of the great success of her first appearance, he tore the letter into shreds, and inwardly hoped that she would never come back to Palmiste. It is not exactly cowardice, this sort of feeling; nor is it wholly shame. It is, perhaps, the feeling that prompts one to put away all signs and remembrances of sickness and suffering. We do not like to be reminded of it. There are thousands of respectable, godly, pure-minded fathers and husbands, who have a sort of skeleton in the closet, hid away and locked up, as it were, in their brain, not to be lightly disturbed. In providing for Marie, and taking charge of her son, Mr. Durnford had done, he thought, enough. There was no longer any possibility of love—let there be no longer any friendship. And so her letters worried and irritated him, and his answers grew colder and shorter. From time to time he read in the papers of her success. Madame de Guyon appeared at the Italian Opera. She was described as of French descent,—some said from Martinique; none thought of Palmiste. She was said to be a young and strikingly beautiful widow. Her reputation was absolutely blameless; her name was widely spread about for those graceful deeds of charity which singers can do so well. And when, after a few years of the theatre, she withdrew altogether from the stage, and it was stated that henceforth she would only sing at oratories and at concerts, everybody said that it was just the thing that was to be expected of a singer so good, so charitable, and so pious.

He once wrote to her, advising her to marry again; nor did he ever understand the bitter pain his letter caused her.

For women are not as men. It seems to me that women can only give themselves wholly and entirely to one man. To other men they may be thoughtful, and even tender; but one woman is made for one man, and when she loves she loves once and for all. Marie had told her old lover that she loved him no more,—that what had been could never come again. *It was not true.* What had been might, at any time, have come over again. The old idol of her heart

was not shattered. It was erect, and stronger than ever,—strengthened by the thought of her boy; fostered by the memories which ran like a rivulet through the waste and loneliness of her life, filling it with green things and summer flowers; and held in its place by that constancy of woman which is proof against time and circumstances and absence and neglect. George Durnford loved her no longer. He did not, it is true, understand her. That magnificent nature, which had been like some wild forest plant, unchecked in its luxuriance, when he knew it best, was developed by training and sorrow to one of the most perfect types of womanhood. What more splendid than the full maturity of her beauty when she swept across the stage? What more perfect than the full rich tones of a voice that thrilled all listeners as she sang? And what—could he only have known it—more precious than the riches of the thoughts which welled up in her mind with no listener to impart them to, no husband to share them? But George Durnford died; and only when she heard of his death was she conscious of the space he occupied in her mind. She saw it in the papers; for no one wrote to her, or knew of her existence. Then she got the Palmiste papers, and read first of his funeral, and the fine things that were said about him, and then of his will; and next she saw the names of the two boys as passengers to England. And presently she began to live again; for she hoped to meet her boy, and—after many days—to reveal herself to him, and get back some of the love she lavished upon him in imagination. She did not hurry. She preferred, for many reasons, to bide her time. First, because she thought him ignorant of his birth; secondly, she thought that it would be better to wait till he was a man, and could better bear what would certainly be a bitter blow,—the stigma of his birth; and, lastly, she was afraid. George Durnford had said but little about him. He was growing tall and handsome; he was strong and clever; he was a bold rider and a good shot. All this she learned from his letters, but nothing more. In the last letter he had ever written to her, he mentioned that Philip was going into the army. And after some time she bought an Army List, and read with ecstasy the name of her son in the list of ensigns. She never attempted to see him, but she saved her money—she had made a good deal of money by this time—and laid it out judiciously for the future benefit of her son. If Philip had only known!

She lived in her own house, near Regent's Park, where she saw but few friends, and

those chiefly of her own profession. Her life was not dull, however. It was brightened by the hope that lived in her. Morning and evening she prayed for her son; all day long she thought about him; at night she dreamed of him. She pictured him brave, clever, and handsome; she made him her knight, — young Galahad, without stain or blemish of sin; and she trembled at the thought of meeting him — not for fear he might fall below the standard she had set up, but for fear of her own unworthiness. She was to go to him, some day, with the bitter confession of his mother's sin. She was to say, "You are separated from other men by a broad line. They may rejoice in their mothers: you must be ashamed of yours." She was to ask him, not for that love and respect which wives can get from their sons, but for love and pity and forgiveness. She was to blight his self-respect and abase her own. No wonder that she hesitated, and thought, year after year, that there was time enough.

But one day, looking at the familiar page in the Army List, she saw that her son's name was missing; and, on looking through the "Gazette," she found that he had sold out. This agitated her. Something must have happened. He had abandoned his career. He might have married. How could she face his wife? Or he had met with some misfortune. How could she ascertain what? She did not know what to do or to whom to apply. The weeks passed on. She was in great anxiety. At last, unable to bear any longer the suspense of doubt, she went to a private inquiry office, and set them to work to find Mr. Durnford's address. It was quite easy to ascertain where he had lodged before he sold out, but impossible to learn where he was now; only the lodging-house people gave the address of his friend, Mr. MacIntyre, and his cousin, Arthur Durnford. This was all she wanted. Of the two, she would first try MacIntyre. She knew him of old. He was unscrupulous, she well knew, and still poor, as she suspected. She would bribe him to give her Philip's address, unless he would do it for nothing.

All this is by way of explanation of her sudden appearance at a moment so inopportune, when dignity was utterly out of the question, and her old acquaintance showed to such singularly small advantage.

The shock of Venn's intelligence was for the moment too much for her.

"I fear I have hurt you," said Hartley. "Pardon me, I was careless of my words. Did I understand him rightly? He said that — that" —

"Where is he?" asked Marie. "Bring him here."

Venn opened the door of the bedroom and looked in, but no one was there.

"He is gone, madame. Pray let me be of assistance to you. I can give you Mr. Durnford's address. It is at Notting Hill that he lives."

"Stay. First, the young lady you spoke of, sir — your ward. Could I see her?"

Venn hesitated.

"She is ill — she has just lost her husband. Would it do any good if you were to see her?"

Marie looked him straight in the face.

"I have not seen Philip Durnford for twenty-five years, and I am his mother." She blushed like a girl. "It is twenty-seven years ago," she murmured. "I am a native of the Palmiste Island."

"Good God!" said Venn, thinking of Arthur.

"I put my story into your hands, though I do not even know your name. You may, if you please, publish to the world the shame and disgrace of a woman that the world has always believed pure and good; but I think you will not do that."

"I?" cried Venn. "Great heavens! why should I? My name is Venn, Madame de Guyon. My father was Mr. George Durnford's tutor, and I am a friend of Arthur Durnford. My ward — the little girl that I brought up and made a lady of — is the grand-daughter of my old laundress. Your son made her acquaintance — and — it is best to let you know the whole truth — made her promise to hide the fact from me; brought her here to these very rooms, one evening, six months ago, when MacIntyre married, pretended to marry them, — I don't know which. Then he took her to France. She will tell you the rest, perhaps, herself."

"Advise me what is best to do," cried Marie, in deep distress. "Oh, sir, if I have but found my son to lose him again!"

"At all events, you shall see his wife," said Venn. "You will be very kind to her? Yes, I see you will. But there are other complications."

Then he told the story of the transferred property, just as he had heard it from Arthur an hour before.

"But I was never married," said Marie simply.

"Then Mr. MacIntyre, who is really a scoundrel of quite the ancient type, and, as one may say, of the deepest dye, has been forging the letters; and we shall, perhaps, have the pleasure of seeing him in the felon's dock before long."

"Promise me again," cried Marie, alarmed, "that you will keep my secret, whatever happens."

"I have promised already," said Venn.

"Not even Arthur Durnford shall hear a word. But it seems a pity to let the MacIntyre go."

"Then take me to your ward," Marie asked him.

"She is staying at my sister's house. Do not tell my sister, if you see her, any thing. She is a most excellent woman, Madame de Guyon, and as silent as death on unimportant matters; but, in the matter of secrets, I believe she is too confiding. She imparts in confidence all that is intrusted to her in confidence, and considers she has kept a secret when she has not proclaimed it at church. Just now, however, she is not likely to be inquisitive, because she is greatly excited at being excommunicated."

"Excommunicated?"

"Yes: she gave her cat the name of St. Cyril. On her refusal to change it, her clergyman, who holds rigid views, has excommunicated her. It is the greatest excitement that has ever happened to her, and she attends all those ordinances of religion from which she is debarred by her own director at an adjacent Low Church, where the clergyman parts his hair at the side, wears long whiskers, and reads the prayers with solemnity and effect. But I beg your pardon, Madame de Guyon, for inflicting these family details upon you. Let me get a cab for you."

He returned in a few minutes, and they drove to Miss Venn's house. His sister was out. As he afterwards learned, there had been a prayer-meeting at the evangelical clergyman's school; and, as nothing irritated the Rev. Mr. De Vere so much as a public prayer-meeting, she went there ostentatiously. By the greatest good luck, he was passing as she went in, and saw her; so that she enjoyed her meeting extremely.

Laura was lying on the sofa, reading. Her pale cheeks brightened up when Hartley came in.

"What is my ward doing?" he asked.

"Not reading too long, I hope. I have brought you a visitor, Lollie. Madame de Guyon, this is my ward, Mrs. Philip Durnford."

Laura looked appealingly at Hartley; but was more astonished when Marie went straight to the sofa, and, kneeling down, took her face in her hands, and kissed her, with tears in her eyes.

"I had better leave you, Madame de Guyon, I think," said Venn. "I shall wait in the dining-room for you."

Left alone, Marie began to tremble.

"My dear, I ought not to have kissed you. I ought, first, to tell you who I am.

"Who are you?" asked Laura. "I am sure, at least, you are very kind."

"My dear child, I hear that you have suffered. I want, if I can, to soothe your sorrow, and, if it be possible, remove it."

"Ah, no one can!"

"We shall see. Have you patience to listen to the story of a woman who has also suffered, but through her own fault; while you have only suffered through the fault of others?"

She told her own story. How poor and ignorant she had been; how George Durnford had made her proud and happy with a love of which she realized all the passion and happiness and none of the guilt; how he had told her, one day, that it was to be in future as if they had never met; how he had taken her boy, at her own request, and given her money to come to England; and how she had studied long and hard, and learned to make the most of a gift which is granted to few; and then her voice softened as she told how she had made fame and got fortune, and toiled on companionless, cheered by the hope that some day she might find her son, and pour into his heart some of the love with which her own was bursting.

"My dear," she said, "I found not my son, but his evil adviser, — not his friend, — Mr. MacIntyre. And my son is your husband."

Laura buried her face in her hands.

"Yes, I know it all. Mr. Venn has told me. Only, dear, you are not to blame. You are a wife: I never was. Let me find in you what I have lost. If I cannot win my son, let me win a daughter."

"O madame!" Laura replied, stroking back the thick brown hair that covered her face, "you are a lady, I am only a poor girl. How Philip could ever love me, — he did love me once, — I do not know. I am only Mr. Venn's little girl; and you are the only lady, except Miss Venn and Madeleine, who has ever spoken to me at all."

"My dear, and I was only a singer at the theatre."

"But you are a great singer; and I — O madame! and what will Philip say?"

"We will not care what Philip says."

"And then — oh, I am so unhappy!"

And she began to cry.

Marie cried too; and the two found consolation in the usual way.

Then Laura began to whisper.

"You have had some comfort, — you had a child."

"We will get you back your husband. Philip cannot be very bad, dear. He loved you once, at any rate."

She brightened up; but the moment after, fell back upon the sofa, and burst into fresh tears.

"I shall never get him back. I *could* never see him again. You do not know what he called me, — me, his wife. I *am* his wife, am I not? I could never look Mr. Venn in the face again if I were not."

"Yes, dear, you are his wife, surely you are; but I will go and see him."

"Take Mr. Venn with you: let him speak for me."

"Would it be wise? No, — I will go alone. If he will not hear me, he will certainly not hear Mr. Venn. And now, I must go; but, dear, my heart is very heavy. I am oppressed with a sense of coming evil. Tell me, — if Philip, if my son, should not receive me well, if, after all these years of forbearance, he greets me with coldness and distrust — oh, tell me what he is like!"

Laura told her as well as she could.

"But Philip is passionate," she concluded; "and I think he has lost some money lately, and Mr. MacIntyre makes him do reckless things."

"I can manage Mr. MacIntyre," said Marie. "Besides, he is not likely to forget the lesson Mr. Venn has taught him to-day."

"What was that?"

Marie told her of the scene she had witnessed.

Laura, usually the mildest of her sex, set her lips together, and clasped her hands.

"Oh, I am so glad — I am so glad! Was he hurt? Did he cry? Tell me all over again," she said.

Marie only smiled.

"Let me finish, dear. I have only one proposition to make to my son. If he will not agree to that, I have one to make to you."

"What is that?"

"Would you like to go back to Philip?"

She clasped her hands, and began to think.

"He was so cruel! If I only could. If he would only take me. But I *am* his wife."

"And if he will not, will you come with me, child? My heart is empty: I long for some one to love. Come with me, and be my loved and cherished daughter."

Laura threw her fair young arms round her neck, and Marie kissed her passionately.

"I must go now," she said, after a few minutes. "I do not think I can go to your husband's — to my son's house to-day. I must wait till to-morrow. Write down his address, dear, on my tablets. And now, good-by. Ask Miss Venn to let me come to see you. Tell her only that I am your husband's old friend; and remember to keep my secret till I see you again."

She went away. Presently came back Miss Venn, in a high state of exhilaration at the discomfiture of the Rev. Mr. De Vere, who, seeing her open act of rebellion, must have gone home, she concluded, in a furious state of indignation. This, indeed, the reverend gentleman had actually done. And she called loudly for St. Cyril, — her cat, — and sat down and made herself comfortable, and gave her brother a comfortable little dinner.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"We have not had a chorus for a long time," said Venn. "All these excitements have been too much for us. Sit down, Arthur. Jones, consider this a regular night."

"I have been reading," said Jones presently, "with a view to understanding the great secret of success, some of the poetry of the period; and I beg to submit to the Chorus a ballad done in the most approved fashion of our modern poets. May I read it? It is called 'The Knightly Tryste,' or, if you will, 'My Ladye's Bidding,' which is more poetical: —

'Between the saddle and the man,
Ah me! red gleams of sunlight ran;
He only, on his Arab steed,
Left all the streaming winds behind.
Sighed, "Well it were, in time of need,
A softer place than this to find."

The twinkling milestones at his side
Flashed for a moment as he passed;
Small thought had he of joy or pride,
Groaned only, "This can never last."
And more and more the red light ran
Between the saddle and the man.

"Woe worth the day," he gasped by times,
"My lady fair this fancy took;
And Devil take her prattling rhymes
About the willows and the brook;
For this I suffer what I can,
Between the saddle and the man."

Still rode the knight; the dewy beads
Stood on his brow, but on he spurred;
Ere compline bell doth ring it needs
He meet the lady by her word;
And great discomfort then began
Between the saddle and the man."

There came a moment — o'er a gate,
Five-barred, close shut, the destrier flew;
He also — but his knees, too late,
Clutched only mosses wet with dew.
Ah, me! the ever-lengthening span
Between the saddle and the man."

Jones read and looked round for applause. None followed.

"It won't do, Jones," said Venn, — "it won't do. You had better stick to the old school. The grotesque and the unreal won't last. Write for posterity, if you must write poetry."

"I don't care so much for posterity as I

did," said Jones. "I want things that pay. Now, I really think an able editor ought to give something for those lines."

"Low and grovelling aim! Look at me, — I write for nothing but the praise of my fellow-countrymen, as soon as I can get published."

"I sometimes think," Jones continued, "of taking up the satirical line. Are you aware that there is not such a thing as a satirist living? We want a Boileau. The nation asks for a man of sense. Something must be done soon."

For once Jones looked melancholy.

"What is it, Jones?" asked Venn. "More disappointments. Remember the banquet of life, my boy?"

"I do," said Jones, with an effort to smile. "In the words of Hannah More, —

'For bread and cheese and little ease
Small thanks, but no repining;
Still o'er the sky they darkling lie, —
Clouds, with no silver lining.'

Come," he went on, "the Chorus is unusually dull and silent. I will sing you a song made for the occasion: —

'I am an unfortunate man,
Bad luck at my elbow doth sit;
Let me tell how my troubles began,
If only my feelings permit.

The spoon that my young lips adorned
In infancy's hour was of wood:
No freaks, then, of fortune I mourned,
And for pap it was equally good.

To school I was sent, and the first day
I was caned with the rest by mistake;
But each morning that followed, the worst day
Seemed still in my annals to make;

For I laughed when I should have been weeping;
I cried when I ought to have smiled;
And the painful results still are keeping
Their memory green in this child.

The other boys sinned at their leisure;
They could do what they liked and escape;
But I, for each illicit pleasure,
Still found myself in a new scrape.

Now in London I linger, and sadly
Get shoved on my pathway by fate:
Hope dances before me, and madly
Shows fruits that are only a bait.

For I am an unfortunate man;
But fate, which has taken the rest,
Has given, to console when she can,
Good spirits still left in my breast."

"That's not very good, Jones," said Lynn. "What has put you into this dejected and miserable frame, unfit for the society of a decent and philosophical Chorus? First you read a bad poem, and then you sing a comic song."

"A letter I got this morning," he answered with a groan. "Let me talk, you fellows, and I'll tell you a story. Call it a vision if you like, — a vision of two lives.

"The two lives were once one. They

thought the same thoughts, and had the same ambitions. They had the same chances, they won the same successes, dreamed the same dreams. No two friends were ever so close; for the two minds were one, and dwelt in the same body. I saw in my vision that there came a time — the boy was almost grown to the age of manhood — when the two separated. It was at Oxford that this disunion first took place. And in my vision it seemed to me that the one which remained in the boy was as myself; and the other, that other self which I might have been."

Jones paused, and pondered for a few moments, with grave face.

"Yes, I — that is, the one that remained behind — was seized with a kind of madness of vanity. All my noble dreams, all my thoughts of what might be, gave way to a desire to amuse. I, that is — of course" —

"Go on saying I, without apology," said Venn.

"Well, I succeeded in amusing the men of my college. I succeeded as an actor — I think I was a good mimic. I sang, I made verses, I wrote little plays and acted them. I went every day to wines, suppers, and breakfasts. I was, of course, tremendously poor; and, like most poor idiots, did no reading whatever. Meantime, my old friend was very differently occupied. I used to see his calm, quiet face — like mine in features, but different in expression — in hall and chapel. He was a student. He came up to Oxford with ambitions and hopes that I shared; but he kept them, and worked for them. Mine, with the means of realizing them, I had thrown away. I used to look at him sometimes, and ask myself if this was the friend who had once been the same as myself, like the two branches of an equation in Indeterminate Co-efficients."

"Jones," said Venn, "don't be flowery, pray don't. We are not mathematical men."

"The time came when we were to go into the schools. I, my friends, in my vision, was plucked. He, in my vision, got a Double First. Curiously enough, in reality I was plucked in Greats — for divinity. However, after this, we took paths even more divergent. He staid behind to try for a Fellowship, which he easily got. I went up to London to try to get my daily bread in any way, however humble. He entered at the bar, — it had always been our ambition to become Fellows, and to enter at the bar, — I became a drudge to an army cram coach, who paid me just enough to keep me going.

"He, too, a year or too later, came to London. How long is it? I think it is ten

years since we took our degrees, and read law. Presently he was called, — I saw his name in the Law List, — and began to get practice. I, like a stone, neither grew nor moved.

"The time goes on; but the two lives are separated, never again to meet. He is on the road to fortune and fame. He will make his mark on the history of his country. He will, — that is, after all, the cruellest part of the vision, — he will marry Mary; for, while the boy was growing into manhood, there came to live in the village where his father, the vicar, lived, a retired officer, with a little daughter eight years younger than the boy. The boy, who had no play-fellows in the village, took to the child, and became a sort of elder brother to her; and, as they grew up, the affection between the two strengthened. Mary was serious beyond her years, chiefly from always associating with her seniors. When she was twelve and the boy eighteen, she could share his hopes, and could understand his dreams. She looked on him as a hero. Like all women, with those they love, she could not see his faults; and when he disappointed all their expectations, and came back from the grand university that was to make so much of him, disgraced instead of honored, loaded with debt instead of armed with a Fellowship, she it was who first forgave him.

"He could not forgive himself. He handed her over mentally to his old friend, and left her."

"But he will see her again," said Arthur.

"I think never. He has had his chance, that would have made them both happy; and he threw it away. My friend, however, who must be making a very large income by this time at the Chancery bar, who writes critical papers in big words in the 'Fortnightly,' whose book on something or other connected with the law is quoted by judges, — he will doubtless marry her, and then they will be happy; but I — I mean the ego of my vision — shall go on struggling with the world, and rejoicing over small sacrifices, resigned to great disappointments, till the end of the chapter. I shall contemplate the visionary happiness of my *alter ego* — with Mary, whom I shall never see again. He will be Lord Chancellor; and, if I live long enough, when I die I shall think of the great works that he has done, and thank God for his excellent gift of a steady purpose and a clear brain."

Jones was silent for a few minutes.

"You were talking about women the other night, — three months ago. It makes me angry to hear theories of women. I beg your pardon, Venn, for criticising your

trumpet-noses; and yours, Lynn, for getting savage over your world of the future. Women are what men make them; and if my Mary had married the future Lord Chancellor, there would have been no nobler woman in the world, as there is now none more tender-hearted and forgiving. But — oh dear me! — if women are frivolous, it is because they have nothing to do. To make them work is to unsex them; to put them through a Cambridge course of mathematics is so ludicrously absurd in its uselessness, that we need no vision of an impossible future world to show us its folly."

"And suppose, Jones," said Arthur, — "only suppose, that Mary marries the 'I' of your dream."

"I can't suppose it. He cannot drag her down to his own level."

"But she may raise him to hers."

Jones sighed. In his vision of the two lives he had revealed the story of his own, — which Venn already partly knew; and the dignity of sorrow for a moment sat like a crown on his forehead. But he shook it off, and turning round with a cheerful smile, adjusted his spectacles, and concluded his observations.

"My own verses again: —

'Gone is the spring with wings too light,
The hopeful song of youth is mute,
The sober tints displace the bright,
The blossoms all are turned to fruit:
I, like a tree consumed with blight,
Fit only for the pruner's knife,
Await the day, not far away,
Which asks the harvest of a life.

And, for the past is surely gone,
The coming evil still unseen,
I think of what I might have won,
And fancy things that should have been;
And so in dreams by summer streams,
While golden suns light every sheaf,
I take her hand, and through the land,
My love makes all the journey brief."

CHAPTER XXXI.

MADAME DE GUYON sought her son's house at noon the next day. She was ill with a long night's anxiety; and her face, usually so calm, looked troubled and haggard.

Philip was at home, and would see her.

The moment, long looked for, was come at last; and she trembled so much that she could hardly mount the steps of the door. He was sitting in the dismantled room of the little cottage at Notting Hill, but rose to receive his visitor.

She drew her thick veil more closely over her face, and stood looking at her own son with a thousand emotions in her breast.

Her own son—her Philip! A man now, whom she had last seen a child of four years old, when she took him out of his cot at Fontainebleau. A tall and shapely man, with a face like that of George Durnford, only darker, and eyes that she knew for her own, — large, deep, lustrous. She gazed at him for a few moments without speaking or moving, for her heart was too full.

Philip set a chair for her.

"Madame de Guyon?" he asked, looking at the card. "May I ask what gives me the honor of a visit from, — I presume you are the lady whose name?"

"Yes: I am the singer."

"I come," she went on, with an effort, "from your wife."

Philip changed color.

"Your wife, Philip Durnford, whom you drove away from you three weeks ago. You will be sorry to learn that she is very ill, — that she has been dangerously ill."

"Tell me," he stammered, — "she is not — not dead?"

"No: grief does not kill."

"Where is she?"

"She is at present under the charge of Miss Venn, the sister of her guardian."

The old jealousy flamed up again in his heart.

"Then she may stay there. She always loved him better than me. I hardly understand, however, what my private affairs have to do with Madame de Guyon."

"I will tell you presently. First, let me speak for this poor girl."

"I am, of course, obliged to listen to all that you have to say."

"I know the whole story, the pitiful, shameful story. I know how, influenced by that bad man, you went through a form of marriage which is illegal; how you gambled away your money; how, when you were ruined at last, you let her go from your doors, with more than the truth, — more than the cruel truth, — ringing in her ears, disgraced and ashamed."

"More than the truth?"

"Yes, more; for the man was once an ordained minister of his own church, and the illegality consisted only in the place where he married you. Philip Durnford, she is your wife."

He answered nothing.

"I do not ask you to take her back. That cannot be yet. I say only, remove the doubt that may exist; and, as soon as she is strong enough, make her yours in the eye of the law as well as of God."

"Why do you come here? What have you to do with me?"

She laid her hand upon his arm.

"Philip Durnford, for the love of all that you hold sacred, promise me to do this. Do not tell me that you, — you, of all men in this wide world, purposely deceived the girl, and are not repentant. O Philip — Philip!"

He started. Why should this woman call him by his Christian name? Why should she throw back her veil, and look at him with her full black eyes filled with tears?

"You *had* married her. You meant to marry her. Do not let me believe you to be utterly base and wicked. Do this, if only to undo some of the past. Then let her stay on with her friends, — deserted but not disgraced. Think of it, think of it! The girl was innocent and ignorant. She knew nothing of the world, — nothing but what one man had taught her. She had no circle of friends, no atmosphere of home, to teach her what life means. She fell into your hands. You loved her, I know you loved her —"

"She never loved me."

"I want to move your heart, Philip Durnford. Think of those in the world who love you, to whom your honor and good name are dear."

She sighed and went on, —

"There must be a way to touch your heart. Think of the days you had her with you, — men have said that for the sake of those early days, when their wives were to them as angels, they love them for the rest of their lives, long after they have found them women, full of faults, and lower than themselves, — when you read that poor child's thoughts, bared before you, and you only, — when, out of all her thoughts, there was not one that she was not ready to confess to you, — when you took her out of the solitude of maidenhood, and taught her the sweet mystery of companionship. Philip Durnford, can the Church devise any form of words, any holy ceremony, any oaths or sacraments, that ought to be more binding than these things? Can any man have memories of greater tenderness, innocence, and purity than you have of poor Laura? Not a common, untaught girl, of whom you might have been tired in a week; but a girl full of all kinds of knowledge, trained and taught. No one knows the story but Mr. Venn and myself, and, — and the other man. The fault may be repaired."

"Arthur knows it, Madeleine knows it, all the world knows it by this time. We waste time in words. I loved her, — I love her no longer. I am ashamed for my folly; ashamed, if you will, of the evil temper which made me tell her all. If no one

knows, why not let things go on as they are? We are both free."

"You are neither of you free: you are bound to each other. Since her departure, you have obtained possession of Arthur Durnford's estate."

"My estate, if you please. I was prepared to prove it mine in a court of law."

"I think not, because I could have prevented it. The estate is not yours by any legal claim."

"Upon my word, Madame de Guyon," said Philip, "you appear to know a great deal about our family history."

"I do know a great deal."

"But I prefer not to discuss the details with you. I return to what I said before. Let things past be forgotten."

He waved his hand impatiently.

"Let us dismiss the subject; and now, Madame de Guyon, pray gratify my curiosity by telling me how you became mixed up in the affair at all."

"Let me say one word more."

"Not one word. I have, I confess, those qualms of regret which some people attribute to conscience. I am extremely sorry that I have made her unhappy. I do not justify any part of my conduct. Mr. MacIntyre did, it is true, endeavor to persuade me that the marriage was legal. I was madly in love, and tried to believe him. Of course, it was not legal. This is not a thing that can be said and unsaid. It is a fact. Facts are stubborn things, as you know. The history of her life, together with the overpowering affection she has for the other man, are not calculated to make me desirous of turning into an indissoluble contract what was really no contract at all. If she wants money"—

"She would die rather than take money from you."

"In that case, I think there is nothing really nothing—more to be said."

"O Philip Durnford! is Heaven's wrath"—

"Come, Madame de Guyon, let us not go into theology. We met; I loved her; I deceived her; was partly deceived myself. I did not meet with any love from her. I lost my money on the turf. I lost my temper with her. We quarrel. She goes away. I sit down and do, — nothing. The religious part of the matter concerns me only. Religious matters do not trouble my head much. I am a man of the world, and take things as I find them. Things are mostly bad, and men are all bad. *Que voulez vous?*"

Good heavens! And this man—this libertine—was her own son, and she was sitting there listening in silence!

But the time was coming to speak.

"I cannot believe you are speaking what you think. You cannot be so bitter against the world."

"Perhaps I have cause."

"You have not, Philip Durnford. I know your whole history,—yes, from your childhood. There are few alive,—unless it be that man MacIntyre,—who knows the secret of your birth."

"There, at least, I have no reason to be ashamed. My mother was married to my father."

She bent her face forward, and was silent for a moment.

"Suppose she was not?"

"But she was. I have legal proofs. They are in my desk."

He grew impatient.

"What is this? What does it mean? You come to me, knowing all about me; you interfere in my most private relations. Tell me, I ask again, what it means?"

"I will tell you," she said. "It is a bitter thing to tell,—it is a bitter time to have to tell it. I have prayed and hoped for five and twenty years; and now I find you—ah, me!—so changed from the Philip of my dreams."

His face grew white, and his hand shook, for a strange foreboding seized him; but he said nothing.

"There was once," she went on, the tears falling fast through her veil,— "there was once a rich man and a poor handmaiden. He was kind and generous, and she loved him: they had a son. The time came when the wickedness and folly were to cease. He married, and sent her away,—not cruelly, not with harsh words, as you sent Laura away, but kindly and considerately. She knew it must come. She was one of the inferior race, with the old slave blood in her veins. The English gentleman could never marry her, and she knew it all along. She could hope for nothing but his kindness for a time, and look for nothing but a separation. She was ignorant and untaught. She felt no degradation. That was to come afterwards,—to last through all her life. Her lover practiced no deception, made her no false promises."

"Go on," he said hoarsely, when she stopped.

"He married. The mulatto girl went away. With his money she learned to sing. She is living now, rich, and of good name. No one knows her past. Philip Durnford, she never married your father, and you are her son."

She raised her veil, and looked him straight in the face. He gazed at her, white and scared.

"And you?"

She fell at his feet, crying, —

“O Philip, — Philip! I am your guilty mother. Forgive me, — forgive me!”

And she waited for his words of love and forgiveness.

Alas! none came. After a while he raised her, and placed her in a chair.

His lips moved, but he could not speak. When he did his voice was hard and harsh.

“You say you are my mother. I must believe you. That I am still illegitimate? That, too, I must believe. The letters and church register” —

“They are forgeries.”

“They are forgeries, — I believe that too. Arthur and I have been tricked and cheated. And so, what next?”

She did not answer.

“See, now, I am an unnatural son, perhaps; but I am going to take a common-sense view of the matter. Let every thing be as it was before. For all those years I have had no mother, I cannot now — not yet, at least — feel to you as I should. Go to Arthur, — I, too, will write to him, — tell him what you please. If I were you, I should tell him nothing. And let us part. I am ruined in fortune and unhappy in every relation of life; but we should neither of us be happier if I were to go home with you, and fall into false raptures of filial love. I am unkind, perhaps; but I am trying not to deceive you in any respect. My mother, we have met once. We are not acting a play, and I cannot fall into your arms, and love you all at once. I am what my life has made me. I belong to another world, — different to yours. I have my habits, my prejudices, my opinions, — all bad, no doubt; but I have them. Let me go on my road. Believe me, with such a son you would be miserable. Let us go on keeping our secret from the world. No one shall know that Madame de Guyon has a son at all, far less such a son as myself.”

For all answer she threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him again and again.

The tears came into his eyes; and, for a moment, his heart softened, and he kissed her cheek. Then the frost of selfishness fell upon him again, and he grew hard and cruel.

“Let us part,” he said.

“Philip,” she moaned, “God punishes me very hard; but it cannot be that you should suffer for my faults. God only grant that you never feel the agony and suffering that you have caused two women who love you.”

The agony and suffering,” he answered lightly, “may be put at the door of our modern civilization. I am sure you will

both feel, after a while, that I have acted for the best. Let us part, and be friends. Sometimes I will come and see you.”

“I am your mother still. You can say and do nothing that I would not forgive. When your heart is softened, you will come back to me. Stay” — she bent forward with fixed eyes, as of one who looks into the future, — “I feel it. The time is not far off when you will lie in my arms, and cry for shame and sorrow. I cannot make it all out. It is my dream that comes again and again. I see the place, — it looks like George’s room. And now, — now, all is dark.” She closed her eyes, and then looked up with her former expression. “And now, farewell, — Laura is my daughter.”

He held out his hand. She drew her face to him, and kissed him on the brow. Then she let down her veil, and went away.

Hour after hour passed; but Philip still sat in the desolate room whence he had driven away the angels of his life.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A MONTH passed by, and no message or letter was sent to Philip. He, now quite gone back to the old life, spent his days chiefly at the Burleigh Club, in the customary unprofitable pursuits of a man about town. This is not an improving course; and every day found him more ready to keep what he had got, whatever might be the truth. His mother? And if she were his mother, what duty did he owe to her? When the new year came round, he was curious to learn if the usual two hundred pounds would be paid into his account. It was not. Then he was quite certain about the sender. It was Madame de Guyon. Another thing bothered him. Nothing could be ascertained as to Mr. MacIntyre’s whereabouts. No notice given at the lodgings. He had quietly disappeared. One thing was ascertainable, however: he had drawn out the whole of his money in bank-notes and gold.

“Come with me,” said Venn, after telling Arthur what he had learned, — “come and see Madame de Guyon. She would like it.”

Arthur went. Madame de Guyon received him with a curious air of interest.

“You are like your father,” she said; “but more like poor Adrienne, your mother. May I call you Arthur? You know the whole sad story, Arthur. At this length of time, thinking what I was, in what school brought up, how utterly igno-

rant, I have brought myself to look upon the past as few women with such a memory could. I can now, as you see, even talk about it. Have you seen Philip lately?"

"I never see Philip at all."

"I am sorry. Mr. Venn has told me all the story. I am permitted to see my son's wife. I even hope that she may come to live with me. But this estate must be given back. It is not Philip's. Cruel as the blow would be, I would even consent to go into a court, and relate my own history, if necessary, rather than let this wrong be done you."

"Philip has offered to restore the estate," said Arthur; "but he may keep it. Be at ease, madame: there will be no steps taken, and Philip may enjoy what the forgeries of MacIntyre have given him."

"I am glad. Put yourself only in my place, Arthur. After twenty-five years of effort, I am rich, I am looked up to, I have a good name."

"Indeed you have," said Arthur.

"What if all were to be lost at a blow?"

"It shall not, madame, — it shall not be lost at all. Keep what you have, the reputation that is your own. Rest assured that none of us will ever harm it."

What Marie said about her reputation was less than the truth. Of all great singers none had become so widely known for her thousand acts of charity and grace; none had a better name; none lived a life more open and observed of all; but she was not satisfied with this. She wanted to have, if she could, the friendship of Madeleine and the love of Laura.

She wrote to Madeleine: —

"You know all my life, — its beginning and its progress. You, a girl of Palmiste, can understand what I was thirty years ago, when I was sixteen years old. I was born a slave, white as I was in complexion. My mother was a slave, and therefore I was one. My people were forbidden to marry by law, — God's laws set aside for man's purposes. They could not hold property; they were not allowed to wear shoes; they were publicly flogged in the Place; they were not allowed to read and write. When I was eight years old, the emancipation came; but, though we were free, the old habits of slave-life rested with us. Think of these, if you can; for you are too young to know much about what we were. Think of what you do know, and then ask what punishment I deserve for two years of sin. Believe me, every year that has elapsed since has been a year of punishment, never so heavy as now, when my son has cast me off. You know what a position I have conquered for myself; you know, too, — I write it with a pride that you will appreciate, — that no

breath of calumny or ill report has been cast upon me during all this time. No one knows who I am, what I was. I wish that no one should know. Why do I write to you? It is because you have been kind to my daughter, my little Laura, and because you are engaged to Arthur Durnford. Years ago, — the last time I saw his father, — I took the two children, my Philip and Arthur, out of their beds, one after the other. Philip turned from me and cried; Arthur laid his arms round my neck, and went to sleep. It was an omen. Part of it has been fulfilled. *Let the rest be fulfilled.* I ask for Arthur's friendship. I — yes, I — ask you for your friendship. It is because I hear you are unlike other girls — independent, able to think for yourself — that I dare to ask it; and I ask it for the sake of Laura, as well as myself. I want to take her to my own heart. I am a lonely woman, and hunger for somebody to love me. I cannot do this unless her friends — you and Arthur, and all — will come to my house. Tell me you can, after these years of repentance, give me your hand. Cannot a woman ever be forgiven by other women?"

Madeleine read the letter with burning cheeks. Why should she not go to see this poor woman, shut out from the world by a thirty years' old sin, that was itself but ignorance?

But she must keep her secret.

She gave the letter to Arthur to read.

"What will you do, Madeleine?"

"I will do what you wish, Arthur."

"What would you like to do? Is it to go and see her? My dear, if you only knew, she is the best of good women."

So Madeleine went.

All this time Lollie was slowly recovering her strength, under the motherly care of Sukey.

When she grew strong enough to go out, Hartley thought Philip's promise should be fulfilled. He approached the subject very delicately one day.

"I have been thinking, Lollie," he said, "that in case of any legal difficulties about your marriage" —

"What legal difficulties, Mr. Venn?"

"You see, my child, a ceremony perfectly binding in all other respects may very possibly not be in accordance with the law as regards succession to property, and so forth."

"But what have I to do with succession to property?"

"A good deal, Lollie; and I, as your guardian, must protect your interests. The best way will be for us to have the marriage done over again."

"Over again! But then Philip would have to be there."

"Philip will be there. He has expressed his readiness to be there. You need not be alarmed, Lollie;" for she began to shiver from head to foot. "He will just come for the ceremony, and go away immediately afterwards. You will not, perhaps, even speak to him, nor him to you. All that is arranged. I know, Lollie, child, how painful all this is to you; but it must be done. Believe me, it is for your own sake."

She acquiesced. If Hartley Venn had told her to go straight to the guillotine, she would have done it for his sake.

The necessary arrangements were made. An old college friend of Venn's undertook to marry them, being just told that the circumstances were peculiar, and that he was to ask no questions.

And then Madeleine wrote to Philip:—

"MY DEAR PHILIP, — You will be prepared to go through the marriage ceremony of the Church of England the day after tomorrow, at eleven o'clock, at — Church, — Square. It has been explained to Laura, to save her self-respect, that this will be done in the view of possible legal difficulties. She is growing stronger and better, and will, as soon as she is able to be moved, go to reside with Madame de Guyon. For everybody's sake — for hers as well as ours — old histories will be left alone, and no steps will be taken to convict the forger who deceived us all. Keep the estate of Fontainebleau, dear Philip, and be happy. You have promised to do every thing I asked you for Laura. You will first marry her legally; you will then take her into the vestry alone, and ask her forgiveness. You cannot refuse so much. I hope that as the years move on, you may love each other again, and forget the wrongs and woes of the past. I love your wife more every day I see her.

"There is one other point I should like to ask you, if I may. It is of Madame de Guyon. You know what I would ask you, and I will not name it. O Philip! if it is a good thing, as people write, for man to be rich in woman's love, how rich ought you to be! Think of all this, and do what your heart prompts you.

"You will see me at the church. Your affectionate sister,

"MADELEINE."

But the letter reached Philip at a wrong moment, when he was in one of his bitter moods; and he only tore it up, and swore. Nevertheless, he wrote to say he would keep his promise.

It was a bitterly cold morning in January, with snow upon the ground, and icicles hanging from every projection. Sukey was to know nothing of the business on hand, and was mightily astonished when Madeleine called at ten o'clock, and took out Laura in her carriage, wrapped up as warmly as could be managed. Hartley Venn and Madame de Guyon joined them at the corner of the street, and the conspirators drove to the church.

It was the most difficult thing of any that Laura had yet been called upon to do. She had made up her mind never to see her husband again. Now it had to be all gone over just as before. She remembered that last scene, when, after words sharper than any steel, Philip fell crying at her feet as she left the room, praying her to come back, and let all be as it was. But this could never be. She knew it could never be. All the little ties that grow up between lovers — the tendrils that bind soul to soul, growing out of daily thought and daily caresses — were snapped and severed at a stroke. The ideal had been destroyed at one blow; even its ruins seemed vanished and lost. Philip had more of her pity now than of her love. No more her gallant and noble lover, the crown and type of all loyalty and honor, but degraded and fallen; his spurs struck off, his scutcheon smirched, — a recreant knight. She had forgiven him. Perhaps, too, love might have been born out of forgiveness: a rose-bush beaten to the ground will put up one or two branches, and blossom again. And woman's love, like God's, continues through sin and shame and disgrace. And then, another thing. She had lived a different life. The three women who were now her companions and friends, — Madeleine, Marie, and Sukey, — each in her own way, had taught her what Hartley Venn could never do: how women look on things; how great had been her own sin in keeping her secret from Hartley. With all these influences upon her, as she grew stronger, her very face seemed to change: she passed from a girl to a woman, and her beauty grew, so to speak, stronger and more real.

Hartley led her up the aisle. There were no bridal veils, no bridesmaids, no pealing organ. She kept her eyes on the ground; but she knew Philip was standing, pale and agitated, by the altar.

The clergyman came out.

A strange wedding. The clerk and the pew-opener stared with open eyes at each other; for the bride stood before the altar, like a culprit, — pale, thin, tearful, shivering. Beside her, Venn, his smooth cheek flushed with suppressed fury, as he stood face to face with the destroyer of his hap-

piness. All his philosophy, his acceptance of the inevitable, his resignation to fate, seemed useless now to stay the angry beating of his heart. But for the presence of the women, he might have broken out then and there. Behind Laura, another, more deeply moved than any of the rest—the mother of the Bridegroom. With her, Madeleine, anxious that there should be, above all, no scene,—the only one present to whom the whole ceremony did not appear a kind of strange, wild dream.

As for Philip, he stood, at first defiantly, looking straight at the clergyman; and, but for the hot flush upon his face, you might have thought him careless. Madeleine looked at him, and knew otherwise. Presently he had to kneel. Then, open as natures such as his are to every kind of influence, the words of the prayer fell upon his dry heart like rain upon a thirsty soil; and he was touched, almost to tears, by pity and sorrow for the gentle girl at his side, but not by love.

They stood up, face to face. For the second time their hands were joined with solemn words; and Laura started when she heard the voice of Philip—low and sad as it seemed—saying, after the clergyman, the words prescribed by the Church.

They were pronounced man and wife.

Philip took her by the hand, and led her into the vestry, shutting the door.

He placed a chair for her, and stood in front. The church service had softened him, and the better nature was again uppermost.

"Laura," he said, "I promised Madeleine to remove any doubts that might exist in any mind by going through this ceremony. That is done. We are now married so that no one, if they could say any thing before, can say a word now against the legality of our union; but one thing remains. I have done you cruel wrong. Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, Philip, I have forgiven."

"Freely and fully?"

"Long since, Philip,—long since."

"We ought never to have met, child. Tell me again, that I may take the words away with me, that you forgive me."

"Philip, in the sight of God, I forgive all and every thing."

"We must part, Laura, now,—at all events, for the present. It is best so, is it not? I shall travel. We will not even write to each other. I have not forgiven myself. Kiss me once, my wife."

She stood up, and kissed him on the lips, her tears raining on his cheeks. Then Philip opened the door and stepped into the church, where the clerk was standing open-mouthed at this extraordinary conduct.

"There are some papers to sign, I believe," he said.

They all went into the vestry. Philip signed.

"I have done what I promised, Madeleine."

Madeleine made a gesture in the direction of Madame de Guyon, who was bending over Laura.

"You have no word for her," she whispered.

He turned to his mother, hesitated a moment, then raised her hand and kissed it. She threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him passionately, whispering,—

"Philip, my son, come back to us soon"

He freed himself gently, placed her in a chair, and took his hat. Then he saw Hartley.

"You are Mr. Venn?" he asked. "I cannot ask your forgiveness, that would be too preposterous. I leave my wife and—and my mother in your care."

He left the vestry, and strode down the aisle. They heard his footsteps out of the church door, and down the street outside. Then, they, too, left the church, and drove away in Madeleine's carriage to Madame de Guyon's house.

"He asked me to forgive him, mamma," said Laura, sobbing in her arms. "He told me he was sorry. Let us pray for him together."

"This," said the clerk to the old woman who assisted—"this here is the most extraordinary and rummest wedding I ever see. First, the young man he comes half an hour early. I told him to look at the clock. 'Damn the clock,' he said, begging your pardon, Mrs. Trigg. Such was his blasphemous words, and in a church! He didn't give you much, I suppose, Mrs. Trigg? You ain't a great deal richer for this precious morning's work?"

"Not a brass farthing!"

"Ah! they call themselves gentlefolks, I suppose. It's a queer way to begin married life by giving the church people nothing, let alone quarrelling before ever they come near the place! However, I dessay there's nothing absolutely illegal in not giving the clerk and pew-opener their just and lawful dues; but it looks bad. It looks very bad. Mark my words, Mrs. Trigg: there will be no blessin' on this wedding."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

So Philip went his way, and they heard no more of him for a time. But a change was coming over the unhappy young man; a change for the worse. He was, as has

been seen, of that light and unstable character whose good and evil never seem to end their contest, whose owner is able at one moment to resolve the highest and noblest things, and at the next to fall into the lowest and basest actions. Does this come from the fatal African blood? God forbid that we should say so; but surely it may be helped for the worse by the presence of a constant suspicion of inferiority. It is self-respect that makes men walk erect, and in a straight line. We who sin are men who esteem ourselves but lightly. Sinners there are who think no small beer of themselves — rather the finest and oldest Trinity Audit; but they are those who have framed themselves a special code of honor and morality; and, if we called things by their right names, we should not use the idle metaphors of the common jargon, saying of a man that he wants ballast, bottom, backbone, staying power, energy, but we should say that he wants self-respect. This is the quality that makes a man Senior Wrangler, Victoria Cross, K.C.B., Mayor of his town, Deputy Grand of the Ancient Order of Druids, or any other distinction we long for. This is what inspires industry, pluck, perseverance, confidence, — every thing. Dear friends, and fathers of families, make your sons conceited, vain, proud, self-believers, encourage confidence. Never let them be snubbed or bullied. See that they walk head erect and fist ready. Inspire them with such a measure of self-esteem as will make them ready to undertake any thing. If they fail, as is quite likely, no matter. They would have failed in any case, you see; and they have always their conceit to fall back upon. Lord John Russell is a case in point. Ready to command the Channel Fleet, — you know the rest of it. I know a man — the stupidest, piggest-headed, most ignorant, most conceited, and most inflated bloater of a man you ever saw. This creature, by sheer dint of conceit and vanity, which made him step calmly to the front, and stand there *just as if he were in his right place*, has a great house at South Kensington, and is director of a lot of companies. He is also, save the mark! a Fellow of the Royal Society. He got this, I know, by asking for it; and they were so astonished by the request that they gave him the distinction by mistake. He sent in his name with all the letters of the alphabet after it — those degrees which you can get for two guineas a year or thereabouts — F.A.S., F.B.S., F.C.S., F.D.S., &c.; and then F.R.A.S., F.R.B.S., F.R.C.S., &c., and after the names there came the words, in great capitals, **AUTHOR OF THE WORK ENTITLED "ON THE TRIT-**

URATION OF IGNEOUS PARTICLES." You see, he once rubbed a couple of sticks together to try and make a fire, after the manner of the barbarians, and failed to do more than bark his own knuckles. Then he wrote a pamphlet, in six pages, on the subject. This was his work, to which he refers whenever a scientific point is mooted.

Pardon me, reader, whenever I think of that man and this subject, I am carried away with an irrepressible enthusiasm and admiration.

Graviora canamus. It is an easy thing to write of a man's downward course — but a sad thing. Poor Philip, seeing sometimes the things he had done in their true and real characters, was afflicted with a sense of shame and disgrace that became so strong as to drive him back upon himself. He left off going to the club. That is to say, he left off going among his fellow-men at all. He had no friends, except club-friends. Occasionally he might be met, but not in the daytime, wandering carelessly along the streets. For he could not sleep at night, and used to tire himself by long, lonely walks, and then get home to his rooms at three in the morning, and go to bed exhausted. Presently two devils entered into him, and possessed him. The first was the demon of drink. He began to drink in the morning; he went on drinking all day. At night he was sodden, and could sleep.

All this was not done in a day. A man who begins to live by himself in this great London, where it is so easy, soon drops into the habit of ceasing to care for any society. The streets are society, — the long and multitudinous streets, with the roar of the carriages and the faces of the people. The streets inspired Dickens, who would come up from the country to London, and find in the streets the refreshment that he needed. The streets possessed the soul of De Quincey. To me there is no exhibition in the world comparable to Regent Street at four, or to the strand all day long. I know a man who dropped some years since into this lonely life. He goes nowhere now; he cares to go nowhere. He dines every day at the self-same seat and the self-same place, on the self-same dinner. Then he goes back to his chambers, smokes a cigar, and presently to bed. In the daytime he goes up and down the streets.

Philip, in his bitter moods, began by going less often to the club, so that he gradually dropped out of the set. He was no longer to be depended on for a rubber. His face was missed at the nightly pool. No more bets were to be got out of him. And then he ceased to go there at all.

It was at this period, during February and March, that another fancy took him. He found out from the "Directory" where Madame de Guyon lived. It was in one of those houses that lie so thickly round the north of Regent's Park. One night he walked up there after dinner. It was a house with a little garden-ground under the windows. One room, the drawing-room, was lighted up. The blinds were not down, and the curtains not drawn. Philip stood on the pavement, and looked in through the railings. The party inside consisted of two ladies, — his mother and his wife, — and a man, Hartley Venn. Venn was lying lazily in an easy-chair; Madame Guyon was sitting opposite to him, knitting; Lollie sat in the middle, reading aloud. Philip heard her voice. She had one of those sweet, rich voices — not strong — which curl around a man's heart like the tendrils of a vine. I hate a woman with a loud voice, and I hate a woman who whispers. He could not hear what she read; but he listened to the voice, and tried to remember the past. All that blind, mad passion was dead. There was left in his heart the *power*, like a seed waiting for the spring, of waking to a higher and purer love; and now he seemed to know her better, and acknowledged within himself that she was every way worthy of the best love a man can bring.

He stood without, in the rain and cold, looking on the quiet happiness within. Presently, Madame de Guyon went to the piano, and began to sing. Her glorious voice filled the little room to overflowing, and welled forth in great waves of sound. Philip clutched the railings, and pressed his cheek against the iron. This was his mother, — this glorious queen among women, this empress of song. There was the peaceful retreat waiting for him. He knew he had but to knock at the door. It was like Bunyan's way to heaven: to knock at the door was enough.

Then the younger lady took the elder's place, and began to play, — some of the old things he knew, that she had so often played to him. She played on, with her head thrown back, in that attitude of careless grace which he had never seen in any other woman, with lips half parted, eyes half closed, while the music rose and fell beneath her fingers, and flowed, like the rising tide among the caves, within her soul. Then she, too, stopped; and Venn got up and shook hands with both. He passed out, and crossed to the other side of the street; but did not notice the man leaning against the railings, with straining eyes, staring within.

Then the blind was drawn down. A bell rang. Some one — his wife — played an evening hymn. They sang. Then a monotonous voice for a few minutes, and presently the lights were extinguished. They had prayed, and were gone to bed; but they had prayed for him. And, as he stood there, after the lights were extinguished, there were two women, in two rooms, each on her knees by the bedside, praying for him again, — his mother and his wife. Then he came to himself, and walked back as fast as he could, trying to pull himself together.

Two or three nights afterwards, he went up again. This time there were no lights. All was dark. He waited till past eleven, walking backwards and forwards in the road. Then a carriage drew up, and he saw them descend and enter the house. They had been to the theatre, and were laughing and talking gayly. That night he went home in a rage. What right had they to be happy without him?

But he went up again. Sometimes the blinds were left up, and he saw the group. Oftener blinds and curtains were drawn; and he could only hear the voices, and the sound of the piano. He knew, too, well enough, which of the two was playing; and also got to know — which filled his soul with inexpressible pangs of rage and jealousy — that Venn was there about four nights in the week.

All this time he was drinking hard, and living entirely alone. One night he went to bed earlier than usual, — about one o'clock, — and, contrary to his usual practice, went to sleep at once. At three o'clock he awoke with a shudder and a start. Opening his eyes wide, he saw, sitting by the side of the bed, — in fact on his own pile of clothes, — a skeleton. Not a skeleton of the comic order, with a pipe in his mouth, such as we are fond of drawing, but of the entirely tragic and melancholy kind; with his mouth open wide, from ear to ear, as if it was a throat cut an inch and a half too high up; a long, bony hand that pointed straight at him, and shook its finger in anger; eyes that glared with a horrid earnestness; bones, all the way down, that seemed transparent. Solitude makes men nervous; drink makes them see skeletons. Philip sat up, and glared. Then he gave a half cry, and buried his head under the clothes.

Presently he looked out again. The skeleton was gone. He turned round with a sigh of relief. The skeleton was *on the other side*. Then he covered his head again, and waited till daybreak, — till past six o'clock. By that time the spectre was gone.

The next night he did not dare to go to

bed again. And then it was that the second devil, of whom I have spoken above, took possession of him. This time it was the demon of play. Philip, who knew every thing about London, was not ignorant of the existence of one or two places — where, indeed, he had more than once been seen, — where you may find a green table, dice, and other accessories to the gambling-table. To one of these he went that night at one o'clock. There were two or three of his club acquaintances there, who greeted him as one newly returned from some long foreign travel.

He got through the night so. And saw no spectre when he awoke at mid-day.

Then he began to frequent the place regularly. It seemed to him the only place where pleasure could be found. At the age of six and twenty this young man found the fruits of the world turned in his mouth to dust and ashes. He had no longer any ambition or any hope. The long night spent over the chances of the game gave him light, companionship, excitement. To keep his head clear, he gave up the brandy and water of the day. So far this was a gain. But then he took to champagne at night, and drank too much of it. As for the play, whether he lost or won made no difference, because he never lost heavily; and fortune favored him by giving him neither great coups, nor great reverses.

This kind of thing went on for a couple of months or so. He grew thin, pale, excitable. He had not the moral courage even to go among men at all, never went anywhere except to the gaming-table, — except when he walked up to Regent's Park to catch a glimpse of the home he had abandoned. The sight of it, the occasional sight of its inhabitants, was like a lash of scorpions. If he saw them happy, his blood boiled with jealousy and rage. If he thought they looked depressed, he ground his teeth together, and cursed himself for the cause.

At first he used to have mighty yearnings of spirit, and was moved to knock at the door and ask admittance. These emotions being suppressed, day after day, grew gradually of less strength. Then he ceased to think of any change at all; and went on moodily — without any of that singing and dancing of which he spoke to Madeleine — down the slope of Avernus, the bottom of which was not far off.

He had laid his skeleton by the process of changing his hours altogether; but it was only laid for a time. Youth will stand a good deal; but there is a point beyond which you may not go. Then a disordered liver, an unhealthy brain, a nervous excite-

ment, produce discomforts of a very rude and practical kind. There came a time, early in April, when his sleep was so tormented with terrible dreams, and his waking hours with terrible thoughts, — thoughts that he knew could belong to no sound brain, and sights that he knew to be unreal or supernatural, — that he went to a doctor, and humbly asked assistance.

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothing. Smoking, drinking, living alone, gambling. Every thing that is bad."

"Leave it all off. Go into society."

"The only society I can go into is the society of men who do these things."

"You have money? Good. Then go away. That is the only thing I can do for you. Live temperately, and go away."

"Where am I to go to?"

"Go? Go anywhere. As far as you can. Take a long sea-voyage. Come back after it, — say in two years' time, and we will see how you are. If you stay here and go on drinking, you will probably be dead in six months."

"What does it matter if I am?"

"Pardon me, my dear sir. My business is to prolong life, not to examine into the desirability of preserving it. Most of my patients prefer to live. Doubtless they consider the chances of a change dubious."

Philip went away relieved. He would go away and travel. The new thought occupied his mind all day; and for that night he slept soundly, and if skeletons danced in his room, as they did sometimes, he was asleep, and did not see them.

Where to go?

He awoke in the morning, asking himself the question. And then a happy thought struck him. He would go away for good and all; he would get out of a country where all the memories were miserable to him. The past should be shaken off like an old garment. He would begin a new life; he would go and live on his own estate, — Arthur's, by right, said his conscience, — in Palmiste.

His thoughts flew to the place. He felt again the warm breath of the summer air; he sat in the shade, deep down in the ravine, where the cool dash and splash of the mountain stream made sweet music in his ears; roamed the forest, gun in hand, while the branches sighed in the breeze. He saw the hill-tops purpling at dawn, and the heavy dew lying in great beads upon the roses. He heard the shrill voices of the coolies, and watched the Indian women pass by, with their lithe, graceful figures and their scarlet robes. And all at once a wild longing came over him to be there, and at peace.

All day long he went about, radiant with the new thought. He drove to Silver's, and ordered a lot of things to be put together at once. He drove to his agent's, and told him what he was going to do. He ascertained that the steamer left Southampton in three days, and he took his passage.

Then he went home, and dreamed of the future.

There, in that land where it is always afternoon, peace would come to him at last, and conscience be still. A pleasant life lay before him, — a life of ease and dignity. He would be a judge among the people of his estate, as his father had been before him : he would be the giver and dispenser of hospitality. He would leave behind him, and forget forever, the two women who could be happy while he was wretched ; Arthur, the wronged, — all against whom he had sinned. He would forget them all, and be happy.

Alas ! "*Cælum, non animum, mutant qui trans mare currunt.*"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BAD indeed must be the condition of that man whom a long voyage does not restore to freshness and health. Here are no letters, no duns, no newspapers. The world goes on without you. One has no longer the fidgety feeling, like the fly on the wheel, of being essential to the march of events. Nor is there any sense of responsibility. Nothing to be done ; nothing to be thought of : eating and drinking the business of the day, its pleasure to watch the waves and the skies.

For Philip there was the additional pleasure of renewing intercourse with his brother man. He lost all his spectres, grew once more bright-eyed and keen-witted, and, when they steamed into the harbor of St. Denys, had altogether forgotten the wretched being who clung to the railings of the little house at Regent's Park, and peered into the brightness within. He stepped upon the quay, — the old familiar place, — and looked around him. There were the coolies at work ; the white houses of the residents stretching up the broad street ; beyond, the ugly spire of the cathedral, like a gigantic extinguisher ; and over all towered the mountains, blackening now with the shadows of evening. And then there fell upon him a very curious feeling, because he suddenly remembered that he should not know a single soul in the whole island : not one. During the whole voyage he had been nursed by a vague idea that he was rushing back into the arms of innu-

merable friends. Now he felt like Oliver Goldsmith when he went among the Hollanders with the grandest projects, and only remembered too late that he knew no Dutch. But his laughter was short ; and he felt somewhat saddened as he ordered his things to be taken to the hotel.

There is a hotel at St. Denys, — in fact, there are many, but only one of decent repute. It consists of a long, low, wooden house, painted a bright yellow, with a deep veranda round it. It has two stories, the upper one containing the bedrooms ; and, for coolness' sake, the partitions are not run up to the ceiling, leaving a clear space above. This not only allows the air to circulate, but also permits the guests the advantage of overhearing all the conversation that may be going on in the adjoining rooms. Lying and sitting about the veranda are a crowd of Indian boys, dressed in a suit of uniform, of white trousers and black jackets, neat and handy looking. Outside, under the thick shade of the trees, sit the happy islanders, playing dominoes. They begin this amusement at early dawn, and go on, with short intervals for business and longer ones for breakfast and dinner, till it is time to go to bed, that is, till about eight o'clock. They do this every day, including Sunday, and are never tired ; and when Azrael is sent to fetch them away, they are thinking — as they have been thinking all their lives — of the last combinations of the pips. At least their lives may be called happy, because they have all that they desire.

All was as Philip remembered it years before. The waiters ran about and chattered ; the players smoked cigars, drank orgeat, and chattered ; and, that nothing might be wanting, a great black parrot, which had been there ten years before, was there still, stalking about with an air of being the only really superior person present. It was a parrot of infinite accomplishments ; and at sight of him Philip laughed, thinking how he had made Arthur and himself laugh years before. For he had been carefully instructed in, and had by sheer force of imitative genius acquired, the art of representing all the sounds which proceed from a person affected with cold, from its earliest appearance to its most advanced stage of pulmonary consumption. Too much of him might be undesirable, but at first, he was amusing. Nothing was changed. At the *table d'hôte*, the same dinner. The principal guests were his fellow-travellers in the mail, — at all events, the most important, because they had the latest news. Of course their importance lasts only five minutes ; for no one can be expected in Palmiste to pay attention to

foreign news for a longer time. The concession of five minutes granted to the outer world, the conversation rolled on in its usual groove, and the latest scandal resumed its proper place. Philip noticed it all, and listened, wondering how he should get on with all these people, whom he seemed to remember in a kind of dream. It was their old manner of talk, he remembered.

He went to bed early. Just as he was turning in, he heard voices from the next room.

"*Dites moi, mon ami,*" — it was a lady's voice, — "who was this M. Durnford, who has just arrived and dined at the *table d'hôte*?"

"It is not the son of our old friend," replied her husband, — "not, that is, the son of your school-fellow, Adrienne de Rosnay. Another son altogether. Some early liaison. His name is Philip. He has bought the estate of his half-brother, and comes here to see it, I suppose. It is not probable he will live here."

"No: that is, of course, out of the question. He is a handsome young man. Pity he is a mulatto. He had much better go back to England or France, where they are not particular as to color."

There was a plunge and a heavy thud, as if some stout person was getting into bed; and in five minutes dead silence, but for a gentle breathing, which gradually deepened into a melodious snore.

But Philip was lying in bed, tossing about, and clinching his fists. On the very first night to be reminded in this brusque and brutal way, it was too much. He lay awake. Why had he come here? What cursed fate was it which brought him back to the island he had always hated?

The night was hot too; and the mosquitoes were stinging his face and hands. He got out of bed, and lit a candle, and sat at the open window, smoking a cigar. The town was silent and asleep. Not even a dog barked; but outside the moonlight bathed every thing with a flood of rich white light. The breeze from the mountains fanned his cheek. There was the solemn silence of the night on the sleeping city; but the peace of night brought no peace to him. Why, why had he come all this way to be reminded of what he had run away from England to forget? And then he cursed his fate and himself.

All night he sat brooding and wretched. As the day broke, he fell asleep, his head on the window-sill, and slept till the noise of the Indian boys recalled him to wakefulness. Then, to avoid meeting the people of the next bedroom, he ordered a

carriage to be brought round, and drove, in the early morning, away to his own estate.

As he had written to no one, he was quite unexpected. The house was uninhabited, the manager and his wife living in a cottage close by. They came and welcomed him, — a bright, cheery young Frenchman, with a pretty little wife. While his own house was being set in order, would he use theirs? The manager led him over his mills, pointed out the great improvements that had been made, and then took him back to his wife, who had got a dainty breakfast, with the best claret at her command, ready for him. Then all day there was cleaning and setting in order; and then, for a few days after, novelty and strangeness, which distracted Philip, and kept him in high spirits. Then he had to go and see his lawyer, which was a day's journey, in and out of town; then to get the lawyer to come and stay a day or two with him. All this took time, and a fortnight passed away before Philip found it dull, or had a thought for the past.

After that, things began to be a little monotonous; for no one called upon him.

Philip fell back upon the officers. There was a regiment whose head-quarters were stationed at a place some eight miles off. It was on detachment duty, but there were always a good many of the officers to be found about the mess-rooms. He knew the regiment, and called upon his old friends. So, at least, companionship was attained, at the cost of perpetual dinners at Fontainebleau — which mattered little, for Philip liked hospitality. But the — — — was a fast regiment, and the young fellows who went to Fontainebleau were the fastest; and the old "pace" began again, with cards, brandy and soda, and late hours.

The first event of importance, as the histories say, was a special humiliation. The estate adjoining his own belonged to a certain old French gentleman who held strong views on the subject of the mixed races. He had been a friend of Mr. Durnford père, but he abstained from calling upon his son.

Now he gave, once a year, a great hunting-party, lasting a week, to which all the island was invited, — the governor, the merchants, the officers, everybody who had the least claim to call himself some one. Philip was his next neighbor; but he did not invite him. Then his guests began to talk about putting up at Fontainebleau during the *chasse*; and it was awkward to have to say that you were not invited.

The time drew near. Philip was riding with one of his guests in the evening. They passed the house of M. de Geoffroi, who was sitting in his veranda.

"Aha!" cried Philip's companion. "Let us ride in, and call on the old boy. You'll do the talking, you know. I can't speak French."

Philip assented, and in a few moments was introduced to a white-headed old gentleman, who saluted him coldly.

"I had the honor of knowing Capt. Durnford well," he said.

"I remember you well, M. de Geoffroi. You were often at Fontainebleau when I was a boy."

"I was. And your brother, M. Durnford? He is married, I hear, to Mdle. de Villeroy."

"He is engaged, at least."

"Yes. It was once the wish of both parents that the estates should pass into the same hands."

Philip reddened.

"That, at least, cannot be, because the estate has now passed into my hands."

"So I have been informed."

Then they talked about weather, and so forth; and presently, when they went away, M. de Geoffroi offered his hand to the other, and merely bowed to Philip.

"Must have set the old man's back up, Durnford. What did you say to him?"

But Philip did not answer; being, in fact, in a temper the reverse of amiable.

The hunting-party came off, and Philip sat at home with troubled heart. The party was nothing, but the *reason*, — the *reason* for his exclusion from it. Then he gave a great party of his own, asking all the Englishmen, who came, and as many Frenchmen as he thought would come. It was purely out of revenge; but it seemed to affect M. de Geoffroi very little.

One more event happened to him; and then he shut himself up altogether at Fontainebleau.

There came the cold season, and the time for balls and dances. Of course Philip got an invitation to the great ball of the year, at Government House, at which the governor appears in uniform, — a gorgeous suit, similar to that of a lord lieutenant; while the members of the legislative council wear wonderful coats, with gold lace in a sort of cushion just where the tails begin, too high up for use, except in a second class railway carriage, where it might protect the small of the back. Then the heads, and the sub-heads, and even the tails of departments, appear in wonderful and strange costumes, the effect of which at first, on the civilian of plain clothes, is simply bewildering, and even appalling. Of course there are also the scarlet coats of the officers. And, on the whole, a Colonial State Ball is as pretty a sight — with

the ladies all in their very finest and best — as one can generally see.

Why do we sneer at the universal desire to put on a uniform? I have never worn any, not even as a volunteer private; but I can sympathize with it. I like to see a man in all his bravery. I think there is no more admirable and edifying spectacle than that of the ordinary Briton in some strange and wonderful costume, put on about once a year. He wears it with such a lordly air, as one who should say, "This is nothing to what I could look if I had on what I deserved." Then his wife admires him, and his daughters. And more than that, all the black-coated civilians who sneer at him envy him. The last is a very great point.

Philip, being an ex-commissioned officer, was above uniforms, it may be presumed; but he was not above admiration for the uniforms of the other sex. The women of Palmiste, pale and colorless, perhaps, are yet, above the generality of women, *gracieuses*. They become their uniforms. They dance with a passion and an abandon which is unknown in colder regions. It is their one great accomplishment; and the young fellow fresh from London rooms looks on with astonishment at the lightning rapidity with which the smoothly polished floors are covered. Very soon he falls in with it, too, if he be of a sympathetic mind.

Philip, long exiled from ladies' society, enjoyed it hugely; danced every thing, always with English ladies; devoured a splendid supper; took plenty of champagne. Then, as bad luck would have it, after supper one of his friends introduced him to the lady he had been dancing with, a liberty quite unpardonable by all the rules. Philip asked for the next waltz. The girl turned red, and, after a moment's hesitation, acceded, and put her arm in his. Her brother, who was standing by with frowning forehead, stepped forward at once.

"Pardon me, monsieur," he said. "My sister does not dance any more this evening."

The young lady took her brother's arm, and walked away.

The next moment he saw her whirled round in the arms of an Englishman.

All the blood rushed to his head, and he staggered with the rage which nearly stifled him. For he *knew the reason*.

He stepped across the room to where the young Frenchman was standing, and touched him on the arm.

"Will you give me a moment's conversation outside?"

The young fellow hesitated for a moment: then he shrugged his shoulders.

"As you will," he said.

They stepped down the stairs, and into the garden. No one was there but themselves.

"May I ask the reason of your refusal to let your sister dance with me just now?"

The Frenchman hesitated. Philip repeated the question.

"Really, monsieur," said the young fellow, "it seems absurd to put such a question. Can we not leave it unanswered?"

"No. I demand an answer, and the true one. I am publicly insulted: I insist on an explanation."

"Suppose I have none to give you?"

"I *will* have one."

"You shall not have one," returned the other quietly.

Philip lost command of himself, twisted his hand in the other's collar, and threw him heavily to the ground.

"Will you give me one now?"

"Mulatto, I will give you none," hissed out his enemy, lying on the ground.

Philip left him there. Going back to the ball-room, he found young Freshley, of the —th.

"Come with me for a moment," he whispered.

They went outside. In the garden was the young Frenchman, trying to repair the damage done to his necktie and collar.

"There has been a row," said Philip. "You know this man, perhaps? I have knocked him down."

"I know Mr. Freshley," said the Frenchman.

"Be my friend, Freshley. I will wait for you in your quarters."

Philip went away to barracks, leaving the two together.

"What is it, D'Auray?"

"I called him a mulatto. *Eh, bien*: it is true, at any rate. Then he put his hand to my collar, and I fell over his foot."

"Doesn't seem manners to tell a man a thing he isn't proud of, does it?"

"What business has he among ladies?"

"I didn't invite him, so I can hardly say; but you had better ask the aide-de-camp. Look here, old fellow, this is a bad business. Don't let us have any public shindy. Give me the name of a man, and I will try to make things square."

"I put myself in the hands of my cousin. You will find him in the ball-room."

Duelling has gone out of fashion in England; but it still lingers in one or two of her majesty's colonies, where, although they have the institution of a jury, the sympathies of the jury are sure to be with the combatants. Here there would surely be fighting, thought Freshley, beginning to wish he had nothing to do with the business, in case of the thing ending seriously.

He found the cousin, and put the case to him.

"I'm going home now to barracks. Find me there early to-morrow morning."

He went home, and discovered Philip walking up and down in a wild state of excitement.

"I will kill him, Freshley. By Heaven! I will kill him."

"You've knocked him down, anyhow. Now go to bed, old fellow, — it's past two o'clock. The cousin is coming to-morrow, and we shall have an apology or a challenge. If the latter — why, then, I suppose, we must fight."

"Fight? Of course I will fight. I tell you, I mean to kill him."

"Deuced easy to pack a jury if he kills you, Philip. Don't quite see my way to packing one if you kill him."

"Bah! You don't know the country. Any lawyer will do it for you."

They went to bed, but not to sleep; and at five o'clock Freshley saw Philip outside, walking up and down, clenching his fists, in the moonlight. So, with a sigh, he got up too, and, half dressing, went out and joined him. Day broke at six, and then they had coffee and a cigar.

At half-past six the cousin was seen coming to the barracks.

"It's manners for me to receive him alone, I suppose," said Freshley. "Let's look as if we had done it fifty times before. Hang it, I feel like an Irishman out of one of Lever's novels. You go in, Phil. Well, M. D'Auray, and when do we fight?"

"I think, Mr. Freshley, that — well, you see, it's an awkward business. I hardly see my way to a fight."

"Oh, very well! for my own part, I'm very glad. My man is insulted: that you will acknowledge. Your man is knocked down: that there is no getting over, is there? So you won't fight? I'm sure I'm not displeased; because, after all, yours is the most injured side, I should say. Matter of taste, — never been knocked down myself. Why can't we fight?"

"Well, your principal — I am not in the least wishing to insult or offend you."

"You forget that Mr. Durnford has had the honor of bearing her Majesty's commission."

"Not at all. That was considered. I laid the case before several of my friends. We all agreed that if he were still an officer in the British army, to refuse a duel would be to insult the English flag; but he is no longer an officer, and we cannot fight him."

Freshley whistled.

"Oh, very good, I'm sure! The knocking down is on your side, as I remarked

before. Have a pick-me-up this fine morning, M. D'Auray, — a brandy and soda?"

"Nothing, thank you. I have the honor to wish you a good-morning."

"Good-morning, M. D'Auray. Perhaps your cousin would like a pick-me-up."

But M. D'Auray did not appreciate the joke, being unacquainted with the niceties of the English language.

"Now, that's devilish smart and good," said the lieutenant, left alone. "Phil, my boy, come out. They won't fight."

"Why not?"

"Don't know. Can't say. Wasn't told. Funk, I expect. I say, Phil, I asked him if his cousin wanted a pick-me-up this morning. Devilish good remark, eh? I don't know when I said any thing sharper. He'll find out what I meant by and by. Look it up in the dictionary, I suspect. Well, old boy, I'm glad we're out of it. I didn't like it at the first; and, between ourselves, I couldn't afford to lose my commission just now. Pretty fools we should look, the brace of us, in a dock, with the beak pounding away at us, saying it was the worst case he had ever known in the whole course of his professional career, — eh? and then, perhaps, chokee for six months, and a court-martial afterwards. Upon my word, I'm delighted. And now I think I shall have another nap."

But that was Philip's last appearance in public. Henceforth his days are few and troubled, and they are spent wholly on his own estate at Fontainebleau.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MEANWHILE, in the quiet house at Regent's Park, the two women waited, — some women seem to have nothing to do except to wait. No change came to them. All they knew — and this through Arthur's lawyer — was that Philip had arrived in Palmiste, and was residing on the estate. Nothing more. As for Laura, her suffering was over.

Only she was subdued. Time, and the atmosphere of love with which they surrounded her, had cured her.

"You love him still, child, do you not?" asked Marie.

"I will tell you, as truthfully as I can, every thing," said Lollie. "You cannot tell — it is impossible for any one to know — how ignorant and foolish I was a year ago. When Mr. Venn said he should like to see me married to a gentleman, I understood nothing, — nothing of what he meant. Then I met Philip; and he asked me to marry him. Mamma, I declare that I ac-

cepted him only to please Mr. Venn, — for no other reason whatever. Then he said I was cold, and wanted me to say I loved him. Of course I could not say so, because I did not then. Afterwards we were married, and we went abroad; and he was kind. I think I began to love him then. But now I always think of the last time I saw him, when he asked my forgiveness, and looked sorry. And since then I have loved him better than ever before. Poor Philip! Perhaps if I had been fitted for him he would have been a better man."

"I think of him always, my daughter," said Philip's mother. "I lie awake, and think of him. They took him away from me when he was only one year old. I have seen him, since then, only twice in my life. Once he refused to own me, and once he refused to speak to me; but what woman can forget the little hands that curl round her neck — of her own child? Philip is my son, Lollie; and a mother's love is better than a wife's."

"I wish I loved him more, mamma, for your sake," said Lollie, caressing her.

"Nay, dear. You are the sweetest and best of daughters. My life, now its great hope has failed, would be sad indeed, and lonely, if it were not for you. And we must pray, dear, more and more, for his return to us. I know that he will one day lay his head in my arms, and kiss me himself. Don't ask me how I know it. I am certain. Only I cannot see all the future; and there seems a cloud which I cannot pierce. Somehow, you are not with me, child."

She often talked like this, pouring out what still haunted her of the old negro superstitions.

"I know where he is now, at this moment," she murmured, half closing her eyes. "It is morning with us, but afternoon with him. He is riding alone along the road. The canes are waving each side of him. His face is clouded and angry. He is not thinking of us, Lollie. Alas — alas! he only thinks of himself. The time is not yet come."

Lollie grasped her hand, and cried out. Marie started, and looked round her.

"Kiss me, my daughter. I was far away in Palmiste with my son, our Philip."

Their only visitors were Hartley Venn and his sister, Arthur and Madeleine; and they went nowhere, except sometimes to the opera, which was a necessary luxury to the singer.

"You have changed Lollie altogether, madame," said Hartley, looking at his little girl.

"How am I changed, Mr. Venn?" asked Laura.

"That is what I am trying to find out. You look thinner than you were; but it is not that. You are no taller; so it is not that. I give it up, Lollie."

Marie could have told him. The girl had been, for the first time in her life, living among ladies, and was now a lady herself—such as all the arts of Hartley Venn could not fashion or produce.

"It is only you, Mr. Venn," said Madeleine, "who never change. Oh that I could tie ropes round you, and drag you away from your chambers, and make you work!"

"He does work, Madeleine. He really works very hard," said Lollie.

"Part of your wish has been already anticipated, Miss de Villeroi; for I have met with a grave misfortune."

"What is it?" they cried.

"I have received notice to quit my chambers at the end of the year."

"Oh!" cried Lollie, "the dear old chambers!"

"I shall not have the heart to find out new chambers, and so I shall go and live in lodgings. It is sad, after so many years of occupation. I had hoped that my life would be finished there."

"Indeed," said Madeleine, "I think it a very good thing. You men get into a habit of doing nothing, going nowhere, and living three or four in a set, which seems to me destructive of every thing. Go into the world, and work, Mr. Venn."

"Really, Miss de Villeroi, you carry about so deep an air of resolution and activity that you shame us all. I *will* go into the world and work. What shall I do?"

This was easier to ask than to answer. Besides, Madeleine was at this time intently occupied in considering Arthur's future. He, too, professed a willingness to go into the world, and work; but what work? Here was a tall, strong man to be thrown on her hands for life, and what was she to find for him? Arthur said he would work; but he never made the least effort to find work, and went on burying himself in his books, while Madeleine fretted about his useless life.

"Marry me at once, Madeleine," he said, "and I will be your secretary. Will that do?"

"I don't want a secretary," she said.

But she consented to marry him at once, which was all he wanted.

This was in February. The wedding was quiet enough, for they were a comparatively friendless pair. Mrs. Longworthy was there; and in the church, as spectators, Marie and Laura. Madeleine invited them to the breakfast; but this was against

Marie's rules, and Laura would not go without her.

When they came back, after a month in Paris, the old life went on just as before. Mrs. Longworthy lived on with them, being one of those old ladies whom it is pleasant to have in the house. Arthur had his study, where Madeleine repaired sometimes in the evening, for those little talks and confidential whisperings which even the most queenly of women are not above liking. But all became as it was before, and the house at Regent's Park was still a favorite place to spend an evening.

"I like it, Arthur," said Madeleine. "It is all so different from what you get anywhere else. I like Madame de Guyon, poor woman, and the noble way she bears her misfortunes. I like Lollie, with her innocent dependence upon Mr. Venn. And I like that lazy, good-for-nothing Bohemian, who is everybody's friend except his own. They are quaint, delightful people. I suppose the world would object, if the world knew all; but then the world knows nothing. And as for poor little Lollie, our sister-in-law, no one could possibly blame her."

"Surely not. If ever there was an act"—

"No, Arthur. Do not put yourself into a rage about what has been done, and cannot be helped. After all, it was mostly Mr. Venn's fault. Did ever man devise a more absurd training for a girl?"

Came again the spring, and with it the little excursions that Venn was so fond of; but they were not quite the same. The relations between himself and Lollie were altered, somehow. He could no longer kiss her in the old paternal way. Sometimes, as he thought of her, he ground his teeth, and cursed; but ever with her, his voice was soft and kind. He was always thoughtful and anxious about her. She was still, as before all this, his little girl.

Marie grew to love him as if he had been her own son; scolded him for his laziness almost as soundly as Madeleine; went to his chambers, and brought away great stores of linen, which she and Lollie amused themselves by setting in order for him; made him read her some of his numerous Opuscula, and criticised them in a way which astonished him; and gave him hints and suggestions which opened out vistas of innumerable other literary efforts, so that he formed as many projects as Coleridge.

The spring grew into summer; and then a change was to happen. For one morning the Palmiste mail came in, and Arthur received a letter from his lawyer.

"Your half-brother," he said, "is going

on, I fear, as badly as possible. It is my duty, — or, rather, I make it my officious duty, — to tell you that his only companions are the most dissipated young Englishmen of the colony, — officers chiefly. At Fontainebleau there are reported to be nightly scenes of drink and play, which will most certainly end in disaster, if not to fortune, then to health. In this climate, as you know, one has to exercise some discretion. Poor Philip has none. I liked him at first. He landed here fresh and bright, as if he had never touched a bottle of brandy; but that is four months ago, and his face is now bloated with drink and late hours. If you have any influence over him, write and expostulate. If you, or any friend, could only come out here, all might be well. Philip is open to any influence. He can resist no temptation: he is led away by every voice that he hears; but he is kind-hearted. In an evil hour he insulted little Volet, his manager, whom you remember as a boy. No better or more honest man ever lived. Volet was obliged to resign. Since he went away, Philip has been secretly sending him money to keep him going: I suppose, out of a desire to make atonement; but the estate is going to the dogs. In a few months the hot season will be upon us again, when these excesses will tell more than they do now. I may say that he always speaks of you in terms of the highest respect. He told me, what I did not know before, that the estate is only his own because you refused to fight the case. I think that you might, at least, write to him."

And so on, all in the same strain.

Arthur showed the letter to his wife.

"What shall we do?"

"You must write to him. Say nothing of the past, except what is kind. I will write too. You will remember that he did once do what I asked him."

"I know, — that was because he loved you."

"He did not really love me. He fancied he did. The only woman he ever really loved was Lollie. I am sure of it, from the way he spoke, of her, the bitterness with which he remembered the poor girl's look when he cast her off."

"How can you be bitter against a woman you have ever loved?"

"I knew you would say that. It is just what a man would be sure to say. The bitterness, great stupid, was in his own breast; and he thought he felt bitter towards her. Suppose you are bilious. It is not a romantic comparison, but it will do. You see every thing yellow. That is how Philip saw things. His real nature was turned inside out. I told you, months ago,

that his mind was like your old garden, all overrun with pumpkins.

"What a silly, unreasonable creature he is! Why does he hide his head in a bush, like an ostrich? He is ashamed of his mother, — he knows, my dear Arthur, that all the stupid story of the marriage is a forgery. I saw the look he gave her in the church. There was longing and repentance in it, as well as shame. He is stupidly ashamed that his mother is a great singer, as well as that she is colored. And what a woman is he ashamed of! Is there one woman in all the world more charitable, more large-hearted, less selfish, than poor Marie? Ashamed of her! He ought to be proud of her, and to thank God, who gave him such a mother."

Arthur moved his hand.

"And, O Arthur! he is more, ten thousand times more, ashamed of himself and his treatment of Laura. I believe that is the secret of all his sins. He wanted at first to make money by gambling, for her. But gambling is a hard master to serve. And then — and then — oh! my poor Phil, what a melancholy ending it all is!"

"It is not ended yet."

She shook her head.

"You do not know," she said, "but I know; because he sent me a letter before he went away, and his landlady brought it. He used to wander about at night, to drink all day. He saw no one. He used to lie on the sofa, with his head in his hands, and groan. He used to see things that do not exist in the daytime. He knew he was dishonored, poor fellow; and he tried, like a weak creature as he is, to drown it all in drink."

"I blame myself, Madeleine. I should have gone to him, in the old way, and said what I could to help him. Poor Phil is good at heart."

"Good at heart! What is the good of that? Everybody is good at heart. I want men to be strong of will. Women only love strong men."

"Then, why do you love me, Madeleine?"

"I don't know, Arthur," she said, smiling. "You know that I love you, dear — do you not? — with all the strength of my nature. But then you are strong in all good things. I believe in your nobleness, dear. God knows, if man and wife cease to believe in that, there can be nothing left. . . . Let us go and see madame."

They got there in time for luncheon. Venn was lying lazily on the sofa. He did not get up as they came in; but held out his hand, smiling."

"You come like a breath of the most invigorating breeze, Mrs. Durnford. Do not reproach me. I am hard at work, try-

ing to make out, with Lollie here, what it is I am to work at."

"I tell him he ought to practise at the bar," said Lollie.

"So I would, but for two things. I know no solicitors, and I know no law. Bless you! if I had a brief I should be obliged to put it into a drawer for a couple of years while I read law. No: think of something else."

"What do rich men do?" asked Marie. "They seem always at work."

"They become directors. Then they make speeches. They take chairs. They do all sorts of things for nothing, which poor men get paid for. They even write for the magazines, confound them!"

"Write a novel," said Madeleine.

"Eh?" cried Venn, starting up. "Now, that is a practical suggestion. Lollie, do you remember the novel we wrote together, and buried close above Teddington Lock? That was real work, if you like. Oh, if we had not buried that novel!"

"Let us go and fish for it," cried Lollie, laughing.

"We will. We will go at once. Mrs. Durnford, you will come too. We will go this afternoon. The sun shines. The blue-bottle buzzes. The lilac is in blossom. The lark will be singing. The laburnum is golden. Lollipops, put on your hat, — your summer hat, with the brightest feather in it. We will have a glorious day."

Madeleine made a sign to Marie.

"You three go," she said. "Madeleine will stay with me, and you shall have a late dinner at nine. Go away, all of you, and leave us two to make ourselves miserable together."

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

For all answer, Madeleine gave her the lawyer's letter.

Marie read it, and the tears came into her eyes.

"What are we to do?" asked Madeleine.

"I knew it was coming. I have had presentiments. I have had dreams. I dreamed that I saw my brother Adolphe — poor Adolphe, I wonder if he is living yet — putting a gri-gri under Philip's head. That is to produce disaster, you know. Every night my thoughts carry me back to Fontainebleau. George Durnford speaks to me in visions. And every night I see Philip's face averted. My dear, since I saw him, I have felt myself *en rapport* with him. You may laugh as you will; but, as he suffers, I suffer. When he is wretched, lonely, repentant, I am sad. I hide it from that poor child, who does not know

what such love means, and thinks she loves Philip because she pities him; and, as I look forward, I see nothing but clouds and blackness. A great disaster is before me, — that is, before Philip. Day by day, the yearning has become stronger in me to go out and try to save my boy. If I go, I may find him in the midst of his companions, drunken and dissolute. He may drive me away with hard words. He may — but he will not, he will not, Madeleine. I feel that the hour for reconciliation is drawing near. I shall see my boy. I shall feel his cheek to mine. I shall be able to put my arms round his neck, and kiss him. O child, child! if ever God gives you a son, pray — pray — pray that you may not suffer what I am suffering now."

She was silent for a while, struggling with her emotion.

"Do you think that God is punishing me? I cannot think that. I have learned long since my sin, and been forgiven. Of that I am as sure as if a voice from Heaven had pronounced my pardon. I know it from my own heart. My Father has forgiven the sin of an ignorant childhood. It cannot be that. Then what is it? — what is it? I lived but for him. All those years when I toiled in Italy, trying to improve the defects of my education, all those years when I sang upon the stage, it was all for Philip. I lived upon nothing: my money all went into the bank for him. I waited for the day when I could say to him, 'Son, son, take all I have, and be happy. Only kiss your mother — if only it be once, and to let her go away.' I never thought to be to him what most mothers are to their children: I prayed only for a kind thought, a kind word. I got none; and now, what are all my riches worth? I have no son."

"You have Laura. You love her."

"Yes — I am wicked. I forget, in my selfish passion. I love this child, who loves me. There is no better girl in the world than my daughter. But, Madeleine, I want my own child, — my very own: the baby that lay in my lap — my own life's blood — my darling, my gallant son! Do not tell me that he has fallen from his ideal: he suffers, and would rise again if he could. Let me go to him. Let me try once more to gain his love, all alone, by the verge of that great forest where I wandered one night all alone, and saw visions of the future. Did I ever tell you? I went out, with the first money I ever earned at singing, by myself. I crept at night through the woods. I found George Durnford weeping for his dead wife, — not me, dear Madeleine. I was bitter and cruel. Then I saw poor Adrienne, white,

pale, and imploring, before me; and I was softened. I saw the children. Arthur clung to me, and kissed me, in his pretty way. My own boy, my Phil, turned his face away, and cried. It was an omen, and my heart fell. I left George Durnford, and went back as I had come, through the forest. All the night, as I walked along in the black darkness, I heard voices saying to me that there should be no happiness for me,—nothing but bitterness, disappointment, and misery.”

“But you have found happiness, dear Madame de Guyon.”

“Yes, yes; but not the happiness I wanted. There is nothing that I desire but the love of my son,—nothing but to hear him say that he is sorry for the words he spoke.”

“Play to me, dear. Soothe me with music, for my spirit is troubled.”

Madeleine played, while Marie walked up and down, with fingers interlaced, trying to recover from her agitation.

Presently she sat down, close to the piano.

“Don’t leave off, my dear. It soothes me as nothing else can. I am determined what to do. I will go out by the next mail. That starts in a few days, and I shall pack to-morrow,—take my ticket, and go.”

As she spoke, a wailing was heard from the next house in the street, of a child. She shrank back, with a white face.

“That is the worst sign you can hear.”

“Do not be superstitious,” said Madeleine. “If you had heard the child cry at any other time you would have laughed.”

“At any other time—yes. That I *am* superstitious is true, my dear. I can never shake it off. Call it what you please, weakness, prejudice. I was made superstitious when I was a child; and the old fears cling to me like—like the color of my birth.”

They spent the day making preparations. There were not many wanted; for Marie was a woman whom stage experience had taught to be profuse in dress.

“Lollie will go and live with Miss Venn,” she said. “Yes, dear, I know what you were going to offer, and it is very kind of you; but it is better for the present that she should not go into society. I do not want her to feel things.”

“She would not feel any thing. She is quite convinced that she was properly married at first.”

“It is not only that. People might ask who Mr. Philip Durnford was, and—and—O Madeleine! do you not see that I am right?”

“You are always right, dear madame.”

In the evening the party came back—Venn, at least, happy. They had been

fishing for the novel, and failed to find it. Lollie had caught a gudgeon, Arthur had caught nothing. And so on, childishly happy, as they always were when Venn was with them,—the man who never lost his delight in childish things.

And so, after their late dinner, Venn thought it was time to go.

“Stay a moment, dear Mr. Venn,” said Marie. “I have something to say. Will Miss Venn take our child for a little while?”

“Mamma!” cried Lollie.

“Yes, dear. We have had a letter from Palmiste. I am going out.”

Laura turned white.

“And I so happy to-day. It is wicked. Is he ill? Tell me.”

“We will tell you every thing, dear,” said Madeleine. “Philip is not well, and the news is not good.”

Laura gave a great gasp.

“And I shall go, too,—shall I not, Mr. Venn? Who ought to be with a man who is ill but his wife?”

They looked at each other, and were silent. Venn spoke first.

“Lollie, dear, let me talk to you alone for a moment.”

He took her into another room.

“Would you like to go, my dear?” he said, folding her in his arms in the old fashion, while her head leant upon his shoulder. “Would you like to go? Remember all: He has treated you cruelly”—

“But he asked my forgiveness.”

“And he said himself that you had better be away from him for a while. My dear, your husband is not a good man. He has done bad things. When he comes back, with his mother, and asks to be taken into your arms again, I shall not be one to refuse him forgiveness; but he does not ask for you, or his mother either. If humiliation is to fall on the one who goes out to him, do not let it be you.”

“He will think I have forgotten him,—as if I ever could forget him,” she pleaded.

“Do you love him, Lollie?”

“Always the same question: I love him as I always did, no more and no less; but he is my husband.”

Venn choked a spasm of intense jealousy.

“Love him still, dear. Love your husband; but you must not go to him. Will you be guided by me?”

“I am always guided by you. Whoever else have I in the world?” she said simply. “As if I did not love you better than all the world.”

“My dear little girl!” he whispered, because his voice choked,—“ever my dear little girl, are you not? Nothing can part us. Nothing shall sever the love we have

for each other. But you will stay with Sukey, while madame goes out and tries to recover her son for all of us."

He went back to the others, leaving Lollie there.

Then they arranged things; and next day he went to see Sukey, telling her only that Madame de Guyon had business in Palmiste, her native place. For there was sad deceit and hiding of the truth necessary; and only the little circle themselves knew all the history that bound them together with ties so sacred and so sad.

The day she went away, Marie sought Hartley Venn alone.

"I know," she said, "that evil will come to me: I feel it like the cold wind before the rain; but good will come too. See, now, dear Mr. Venn, there is but one thing I have to say. You will find at my lawyer's, in case—I never come back—my will. To whom should I leave my money but to my Philip's wife?"

CHAPTER XL.

WEARIED in body and mind, Marie landed at the old familiar wharf at Port St. Denys. Five and twenty years since last she stood there, filled with the bitterness of regret, and yet the confidence of youthful hope. She recalled now the moment when, standing on the deck, she marked the mountains growing fainter and darker as the sun set, plunging them in a bath of light and color, till night came on, and they disappeared. Now she stood once more on the wharf, and marked the old things little changed. The half-naked Indians rolled the sugar-bags about, and piled them in great heaps, with their shrill cries and wild laughter, just as she remembered to have watched them as a child. Under the trees on the Place sat the same old men—or they seemed to be the same,—who had always sat there, talking and squabbling over the little politics of the day. Among the talkers under the trees, rolled and played the little naked mulatto and Indian children, as they had always done; and in long line stood the carriages waiting to be hired, as they had stood a quarter of a century since. Nothing was changed; and for a moment the years rolled back, and all her youth flashed again before her, with its happiness, such as it was, and its regrets. Only for a moment. One of the ship's officers, seeing her standing alone, proffered his assistance; and Marie woke to a sense of the dismal errand on which she had come.

"I have got your boxes on shore, Mad-

ame de Guyon," he said: "what shall I do next? You had better let me get you a carriage. Have you no friends waiting for you?"

"No," said Marie. "I am going into the country. It is a long drive. Will you kindly see that the man has good horses? I am going quite to the other side of the island."

"You are surely not going alone, Madame de Guyon?"

"Not alone! Why not? Oh, I have never told you that I was here as a girl. I know every road in the place, I believe. Thank you, Mr. Hatton, for your kindness. If you will only, now, get me a carriage."

Presently came rattling up a long, low carriage, with a pair of screws that looked like any thing in the world except going a long journey.

Marie said something to the officer, who spoke to the driver. He was a mulatto, approaching very nearly to the negro type, with woolly head, and face almost black. He was apparently about fifty, and was accompanied by a little boy, clothed chiefly in a ragged straw hat, half a jacket, and say a quarter of a pair of cotton trousers. He answered the officer's objections, laughing and protesting in a patois that made Marie's heart leap within her, for it was the patois that she had first learned to speak. She understood it all, after these long years; the intonation of the voice, the gestures which eked out the imperfections of the language, the rough, rude inflections of the barbaric tongue; and she asked herself whether, in the far past, she herself could have been as these naked children rolling in the dust, could have talked this jargon, could have been such as her driver. Getting into the carriage, however, she explained to him that she was to go to the estate of Fontainebleau.

"How, madame?" said the man. "No one lives at Fontainebleau since Mr. Durnford died."

"You know the place, then?"

"I was born there, madame. My parents lived close by." He called them his "papa and mamma," this grizzly mulatto.

"But Mr. Philip Durnford lives there now."

"Madame wants to see Mr. Philip? Oh!"

He jumped upon his box, called the boy, whipped up his horses, and went swinging down the street at full gallop. The boy kept prattling to him, but he made no answer. When they had gone some three or four miles, taking advantage of a hill, he turned round, and, poking his head into the carriage, he remarked, in a tone as if he were conveying information,—

"Madame is going to see Mr. Philip Durnford."

Some five or six miles farther on, he put his head in again,—

"Does madame know Mr. Philip?"

"Marie said she had seen him."

"A mauvais sujet, madame. Alphonse, take the reins. Do not whip them, my child. I will tell you, madame. Ah! brigand, you want to repose already? Up, then. Alphonse, take the whip to that *vaurien*." This was addressed chiefly to his horses. "Madame, I am about to tell you, Mr. Philip, — why do I say monsieur? — he is the son of old Mr. Durnford, who died in the cholera, and the little Marie. Pah! everybody knows that."

Poor Marie!

"Philip goes to England with Mr. Arthur. There was a young man, madame. Philip stays for seven, eight years. He comes back without Mr. Arthur. He says the estate is his; and he lives there."

"Who was Marie?" asked the poor mother.

"Marie? I will tell you, madame. There was a young lady, white as a lily, who lived in the great house close by my father's hut. She was lonely, and had no one to play with; and so they took my little sister, who was almost as fair as she was" —

"Your sister! You are Adolphe?"

"Madame knows my name? See, madame." He produced a sort of card, on which was printed a tariff of prices. It was inscribed with the names, in full, "Monsieur Adolphe Napoleon Rohan de Montmorenci." This he read out with unction. "How did madame know my name? My nephew, who went to the great college, gave me the surnames; for I must confess to madame, who knows every thing, that I was formerly plain Adolphe. Alphonse, with all your force, flog that *vieux scelerat* who will do no work."

The intelligent steed, hearing this, instantly quickened, and Alphonse put back the whip.

"Yes, madame," he resumed, "Marie was as fair-cheeked as Mademoiselle Adrienne herself. Only mademoiselle had light hair, and Marie black. Droll, was it not? I was as black as Alphonse here, and so was my brother Alcide; and Marie was as white as a lady. Eh, the *vieux* papa used to laugh when he looked at her. Only the priest said it was the will of God. Well, madame, Marie went to live with mademoiselle, and staid there till she was fifteen years old; then she ran away."

"Where did she go to?"

"Oh! I know, because I saw her often enough. She lived for a year in a little

cottage close by Mr. Durnford's house, in the forest. There she had a baby, white as — as" — here his eyes wandered to little Alphonse for a suitable simile; but, not finding one in his brown face, he turned back to the carriage, — "as white as madame herself."

"Well?"

"Well, madame, that baby is Philip himself. You could hardly believe it, but it is so; and I who sit here am his uncle. Ha, ha, ha! Alphonse is his cousin. Ho, ho, ho! but it's droll."

"And — and — your sister?"

"Mr. Durnford married ma'm'selle, and poor Marie went away. She came back, though, and walked all the way to Fontainebleau through the forest — Alcide saw her — on the night after Madame Durnford was buried. Then she went away again, and no one has heard of her since. Poor Marie! She was too good for us, and the *bon Dieu* took her to heaven."

"Good? When she lived with Mr. Durnford?"

"Eh?" said the black, "why not? Ah! she was *gentille*. You should have seen her, madame, go to church with her white kid gloves, and her silk parasol, and a rosebud in her hair. All the white folks stared at her. Poor Marie! But the *bon Dieu* has taken her, and her son is a *vaurien*. Alphonse, if the idler does not go quicker, get down and kick him."

The idler instantly quickened repentantly.

"He is a *vaurien*, I say, madame. He drinks in the morning, he drinks all day, he drinks at night; and he goes to bed — saoul. No one goes to see him. He lives alone, he sees ghosts, he laughs and cries. The servants run away. Last week one ventured to sit up and watch him all night. He gets up, takes a pistol, and — ping! — if the boy had not ducked his head, like this, he would have been killed. Alphonse, thou laughest? *Malin!* He is very dangerous, madame. And madame is going to see him?"

Presently they left the high road, and turned down a rudely-made lane, cut through the forest. The still, quiet air recalled all the old moments to Marie. She remembered when George Durnford, her lover, made the road; and here, before it was finished, he would walk and talk with her in the evening, telling her a thousand things she had never dreamed of, opening up paths for her thoughts which she had never suspected, lifting her above the petty things that she had been accustomed to feed her mind with, and filling her mind with a happiness that was all the sweeter as it was the newer and more unexpected.

Forgetting her present miseries, an involuntary smile wreathed her lips, and her eyes glowed again with the brightness of her youth, as she thought of those days, all too brief, of love and tenderness. Do women ever repent of first love? I think not. The man repents, thinking of the wreck he has made of a woman's happiness. She weeps, not for the folly and the sin, but for the shattered image, the perished hopes, and the cruel punishment. Guilt? What guilt was there in the young mulatto girl, who, knowing that she could never be aught but the white man's mistress, yet ran willingly into his arms, and obeyed the instincts of a passionate nature that knew no religion, and had no sense of a higher duty? Thousands of times had poor Marie, in the height of her popularity and fame, pondered over the question, and, against all the dogmas of creed, had acquitted herself; and thousands of times, besides, had she willingly acquiesced in the results of the social necessity under which we are all slaves.

The road, winding through thick under-wood, presently crossed a rude wooden bridge over a small ravine. Marie made the driver stop, and leaned out of the carriage, looking at a scene she remembered so well. On the steep, damp sides, towering above the tangled herbage, grew the tall tree-ferns, each with its circle of glory, clear cut against the blue of the sky; along the foot bubbled a little mountain stream over great boulders that lay strewn about. Just above the bridge was a tiny waterfall of some three or four feet, over which the water leaped merrily, with as much fuss and splash as if it were a great Niagara. And above the fall, huddled together and gazing with suspicious eyes on the carriage, stood a herd of twenty or thirty soft-eyed deer. But not on them were Marie's eyes resting; for half hidden within the trees, stood the remains of an old cottage, the thatch half torn off and covered with creepers, the door hanging by one hinge, the door-posts wrenched out by the force of a growing tree, and the whole place presenting a dreary look of desolation. Calling Adolphe, she pointed it out to him, with a look of interrogation.

"It is the cottage of Marie, madame. That is where Mr. Durnford put her when she left ma'm'selle. He thought no one knew. But I knew, and many a time I've lain down there watching Mr. Durnford coming to call her out. Every evening he used to come; and all day long Marie used to sit and wait, looking along the path where he would come."

It was so true; and her heart was pierced to think how this poor fellow, her

own brother, not ashamed of her disgrace, would lie and wait to see her lover come.

"Mr. Durnford taught her to read, madame; and then she used to sit at the window with a book all the day, and at night would tell him all she had learned. Eh? I have listened often at the window. But it did not last long. Then she went away; and then she came back. And then—I don't know where she went. The *bon Dieu* took her."

"Why do you think she is dead?"

"Madame, I will tell you. Because—how long ago? Alphonse, how old are you?"

"How should I know?" said the boy.

"Well, it was twelve years before Alphonse was born. I was down here; it was the cholera time. Ouf! what a time! No one died here except Mr. Durnford; but the night he died I was passing through this road, and in the moonlight just here, I saw two figures in white,—one was Marie and the other was Mr. Durnford. Since then, no one has passed by here at night."

"How do you know it was Marie?"

"What a droll question. As if I should not know my own sister."

They went on; and, as they drew near the house, Marie began to think what she should say to her son, and how she would be received. Her long voyage was ended, but the uncertainty of it remained yet. Nor had she ever realized until now the almost utter hopelessness of her journey. She was to save her boy. But how? By what subtle art was that seared nature to be raised—that seared conscience to become softened? Alas! she knew not that what she hoped to effect by pleading, the mystery of pain and suffering was even then accomplishing.

The carriage drew up in front of the veranda. She got out, and told the driver—her brother—to put down her boxes, and to drive back.

No one received her. It was strange. In the old days, when a visitor arrived, troops of servants came running. Now not one. The veranda, too, once like a well-ordered apartment, with its matting, the blinds, the long chairs and little tables, now stood stripped of all. The floor of concrete was in holes. The old ropes of the blinds hung helplessly about. Creepers climbed up the posts, and trailed along the woodwork of the roof. Outside, the pretty rose-garden was all destroyed, and grown over. The mill beyond was closed. There was no sign of work or noise from the adjacent "camp," which seemed deserted; no voice from the house within, no barking of dogs, or clattering of hoofs. A strange dread came upon Marie. She

shivered from head to foot. It was too late to recall her carriage, which was now out of sight, and almost out of hearing. And with a dull foreboding of sorrow she entered the house which, four and twenty years ago, she had quitted with such repentance and regrets.

The old furniture was there, in its old places; but dust-covered, mildewed, and uncared for. No one was in the salon, no one in the dining-room. Avoiding the rooms to the right, which had been those of George Durnford, she went into the smaller bedrooms on the left, put up originally for children and guest-rooms. These, with all their old furniture, which she remembered so well, had yet a dreary and desolate look. Only, in one, provided with a deal table, a bookcase, and a few chairs, lay the relics of the days when her son, whom she had seen so seldom, was yet but a child. In one corner were the broken toys of the two boys. On the shelves lay the old well-thumbed grammars and school-books. Damp had loosened the bindings; white ants had burrowed long passages through them; the cockroaches had gnawed away the leather; and when she moved them, a whole colony of scorpions ran out, brandishing their tails in frantic assertion of their long-established rights.

She turned away sorrowfully, and, once more entering the dining-room, went in, with sinking of heart, to the great bedroom beyond. The silence and stillness of the house oppressed her. It seemed haunted with ghosts of the days gone by; and, added to this was the dread of something, she knew not what, which she might find within.

Twice she tried to turn the handle of the door; twice her heart failed her. She went to the well-known buffet in the dining-room, where water always stood, and drank a glass of it. That, at least, in its red earthenware vase, was the same as ever. Then she resolutely opened the door, and went in.

On the bed, — ah, me! the bitterness of punishment, — on the great bed which had once been her own and George Durnford's, lay, pale and motionless, her only son, stricken even unto death. Alone and uncared for. With dry, parched lips, that sometimes murmured a wail, and sometimes moved to let fall some wild words of delirium, with bright rolling eyes, Philip was waiting for the approach of death. This was written on his forehead in unmistakable signs. He was not even undressed. It appeared as if he had thrown himself upon the bed with his clothes on, and, in the passion of fever, had torn his shirt-collar open, and tried ineffectually to take off his

upper clothing; and though the fever made his brow and his hands burning hot, he shivered occasionally, and his teeth chattered with cold.

Marie took in the whole at a glance. Stepping back to the dining-room, she hastily brought water, and gave him to drink, and bathed his burning face. He drank eagerly, and as long as she would let him. Then she opened the windows, for the air was stifling; and then — what hands are so tender as a mother's? — she undressed him, and managed to make him at least a little easier. And when all was done, — her patient rambling incoherently, — she knelt by the bedside, and prayed with passionate sobs and tears, that, if her son was to die, she might at least be permitted to breathe a few words — only a few — out of the fulness of her heart, into his listening ear. Presently she recovered, and went in search of help. The silence and stillness were inexplicable. At the back of the house, behind the stables, stood the huts for the servants. Thither she went. They were empty. A hundred yards from the house, close by the road, stood the huts which formed the "camp," — a little village for some eight hundred folks. It was empty and deserted. The shop was closed, the stables were empty. What could it all mean?

Coming back to the house, she went to the kitchen. This stood by itself, a small stone building. There she found a fire; and, crouching by the fire, though it was an afternoon in the height of summer, sat an Indian boy, who only moaned when she touched him. He, too, had fever. She took him up, — a light burden enough, — and carried him to a room next to Philip's, where she tended him, and laid him in the only bed he had ever slept in in his life. Fortunately, he was not delirious; and, from him, she learned something of what had happened.

The luckless Philip had taken to drinking all day long, and almost all night. He had become moody, irritable, and capricious, so that the very men who came for the coarse revels that went on there, grew tired of him, and left off coming at all. Then, having no companions and no resources, he became every day worse. Once, the nearest doctor, an old friend of his father's, rode over to see him; and after his departure Philip improved for a short time. He even sent for his lawyer, and gave him instructions to sell the estate. No purchaser came for it. The crop was put through the mill, and sent up to town; and after it, the unhappy man, growing mad with the dreadful life he lived, resolved to have nothing more to do with the estate, and actually

took steps to get rid of his coolies, in which he had almost succeeded. And for two months the canes had been uncared for, the fields almost left to themselves. He said he was going back to England. As they learned afterwards, there was still a large sum of money left out of Arthur's savings. As for the estate, Philip declared, with many oaths, that, if no one would buy the place, no one should work in it; and then he reduced his private establishment. Two boys and a cook were all he kept; while for two long months he wandered gloomily about his deserted estate, and at night drank himself into a state of insensibility. And then, one night, he was stricken with fever. The cook and one of the boys ran away in terror. The other would have followed, but that fever seized him, too, and held him down.

Marie gathered this partly from the sick boy, and partly from what she heard afterwards. Going into the camp again, she found some bustle and noise. Thank Heaven! there was some one. As she learned afterwards, the whole body of the remaining coolies had struck work that very day, and gone off together — men, women, and children — to complain to the nearest magistrate about getting no wages. Now they were all returned, and, gathered in knots, discussed their grievances. Marie called a sirdar, and despatched him, with a handsome gratuity beforehand, for the nearest doctor. This done, she returned to her patients, the Indians gazing curiously at her.

The boy told her where some tea could be got, and she hastily prepared it for Philip, who lay quietly enough. He was too weak to move, poor fellow; and only murmured incessantly. He drank the tea, however, and then fell asleep, when Marie was able to leave him, and doctor the little Indian who was almost as ill as his master. Slowly the hours passed. She marked the sun set, as, long ago, she had often watched it, behind the hills in front of the house. She saw the moon rise in the dear old tropical lustre; the cigale shrieked its monotonous note; the watchman began to go his rounds, and cry, "All's well!" the same as he had always done; and, but for the heavy breathing of the poor stricken prodigal, her son, she could almost have thought the four and twenty years since last she sat there a dream. About nine o'clock, a deputation waited on her. She knew the rustling of the muslin and the clink of the bangles, and went out on the veranda to receive her visitors. Some half-dozen Indian women stood there. One bore a dish of curry for madame. All wanted to know what they could do for her; all were curious to learn who she was and why she had come; and

all looked on her with a sort of superstitious dread. Their husbands accompanied them as far as the garden hedge, but would go no farther; and now stood, prepared to fly, in case of any supernatural manifestations. None occurred, however. Marie asked if two of them would stay with her, and accepted the curry gratefully. It was the first thing she had taken since the early morning coffee; and a long night was before her.

The women were horribly afraid of the fever. They would do any thing for madame in the house — they would sleep on the veranda; but nothing would induce them to go into rooms of the sick. However, it was something, in her desolation, to have even them with her; and, with a sense of companionship, she went back to watch her charges. The boy at last fell asleep; and she brought a chair and sat by Philip's bedside, watching his deep breath come and go.

The two women outside, curled under a blanket, chattered for a while, and then fell asleep. The watchman at first made a great show of wakefulness, expectorating loudly every time he passed the doors of the bedroom; finally, he, too, subsided into his usual corner, and fell fast asleep, with his long stick in his hands. The dogs began by barking against each other, but gradually grew sleepy, and left off. The cocks, who disregard all times and seasons in Palmiste Island, loudly called for the sun about midnight. As he declined to appear at their bidding, they tucked their heads in again, and had another nap. And then the silence of the forest seemed to make itself felt; and Marie, her old superstitions coming back in all their force, almost gasped with the tension of her nerves. The room filled with ghosts, — not ghosts that filled her with terror so much as regret. Her long-dead mistress, Adrienne, with long, floating light hair, seemed to be hovering in white robes in the moonshine; the faces of old acquaintances laughed at her from the dark corners of the room; or the still, sleeping face of Philip would suddenly change into the face of her dead lover. Voices, too, were whispering about her, till she could bear it no longer, and went out into the open air, to pace the veranda, and look upon the old familiar scene bathed in the silver moonlight.

Then she came back, and prayed again — in the Catholic faith that had reared her — to the Madonna. What matter if no Madonna heard her? The prayer was the same to God, who hears all prayers, and seems to grant so few. Does any one ever get all he prays for? I trow not. And yet we pray, — pray against hope and certainty —

though we see the advent of the inevitable, and *know* that God will not turn it aside for any prayers or vehement calling-out of ours. But still we pray; and when the hand of death is on the nearest and dearest to us, when all that makes life sweet is to be torn from us, we betake ourselves to our knees, and so we go on praying till the world's end, despite the calm persuasion of the philosopher, and the experience of a life. Only, by prayer, we soften our hearts; and it seems as if God answers us by alleviating the blow, and giving some comfort while our sorrow is at its bitterest.

So, while Marie prayed, it seemed to her, in the dim light, as if the face of the sick man altered and softened. The fierce heat of the fever died away, his brow grew damp and chill, his hands soft and warm, and his breathing calm and regular; and for the time, she fancied that her prayers were heard indeed.

Do you know that moment in the night — the passage, as it were, from day to day — when a chill breath seems to pass over the earth, and for a space all the world is hushed as if in death? You may feel it by sea or by land. I have shivered and trembled under its spell, while gasping for breath in the sulphureous Red Sea. Or in the heart of London, should you be awake, you lie and feel that yesterday is dead indeed, and the new day not yet fully born. This is the time when feeble old men and children die; and when death seems most terrible.

At this moment Philip woke: and, at sight of his eyes, the mother's heart leapt up, and she thanked God; for one part of her prayer, at least, was answered. For the delirium was gone, and her son was in his right mind. She did not dare to speak, while, on her knees at the bedside, she looked him face to face, and met his eyes, which gazed wonderingly into hers, so full of tears and tender love.

"There are so many ghosts," he murmured, "about this house, that I suppose you are another. You are the ghost of my mother."

"Ah, no! herself," she cried out. "No, my son, your own mother herself come to nurse you, — your own loving mother. Oh, my boy, my darling, forgive me!"

"I am weak," he said, "and my head is confused. Touch me, that I may know you are no phantom of my brain. Kiss me, my mother."

She showered a thousand kisses on his poor thin cheeks; she took his head in her arms, and bathed it with her tears, — those precious woman's tears, not all of repentance, but some of thankfulness and love, like those that once washed our Saviour's

feet, till Philip's heart, softened by suffering, broke down; and he wept aloud.

But then her fears took alarm, and she quickly dried her eyes. And when he would have spoken, — when he would have answered some of her love with repentance and prayers, — she forbade him to utter a word.

"Not yet, my son — not yet," she said. "To-morrow we will talk. Now, sleep again — or, stay a moment."

She went to the old buffet in the dining-room, and found some claret, of which she made him take a few drops. This brightened his eyes for a moment; and then, overcome with his weakness, he fell asleep once more. Her heart danced within her, — she could not sit still. Leaving him sleeping, she went out again to the veranda, and watched the coming dawn.

The moon was down by this time; and save the Southern Cross, paling before the coming day, all the stars were gone. Only the bright morning star was left in the east. The birds began to twitter in the trees, just in their dreams — as she remembered long ago — before the dawn; and the sweet words of the poet came into her mind: —

"Ah! sad and strange, as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square:
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more!"

And she was sitting with the memories of by-gone days; with her dying son in his last sleep, — save the longest, — while this gray summer dawn crept slowly up the east.

Slowly; but it came. First a dull gray, and presently a silver gray; and then those long, marvellous fingers of light which spread themselves out upon the world as though they would fain seize it, and make it their own. And then the rocks, which had been black, grew purple; the mist upon the nearest peak, which had been a cloud, became a bridal veil, drawn loosely round, and falling in a thousand folds upon the woods below. And then a few short minutes of bright green, and red, and gold, and the great sun bounded into the sky with a single leap; and another day was born to the world. And then the birds all flew about to greet the sun; from the woods chattered the monkeys; the lizards woke up, and began to hunt about for the hottest places, blinking at the light; the dogs from the camp resumed their musical contest in Amæbean strains, just where they had left it off the previous night; the cocks began to crow, and make a great triumph, as if they had compelled the sun to come back by their own per-

sional efforts; the turkeys began to strut about with a great babbling and cackle; the mules came out, and rolled in the cane straw; the mosquitoes all went away to bed; and the women's voices began, in the way she knew so well,—the women always seemed to waken first,—to rail at their lords from the huts of the camp. Her own two companions of the night shook themselves together, and greeted her kindly. She set them to make some tea, and sat with her hands crossed, looking before her at the bright and hopeful morning.

Presently she remembered her little Indian, and went to look at him in his bed. Alas! alas! the poor child was dead. Without a sound, or she would have heard it through the open door, his spirit had gone from him in the night; and he lay, cold and stiff, in the careless grace of sleeping childhood, his head pillowed on his arm, his eyes closed. Struck with terror, she turned to the other room. There, at least, was sleep,—kinsman, but not friend, of death; and, sitting patiently by the bedside, she resumed her watch.

The hours passed on, the sun grew high; but still he slept. About ten arrived the doctor,—she had simply sent for the nearest doctor; but she recognized an old friend of George Durnford's, and went to meet him as an acquaintance.

He took off his hat,—Dr. Staunton,—and, seeing an unknown lady who held out her hand, took it with great astonishment.

"Pardon me, madame, I"—

"O Dr. Staunton! you have forgotten me, then? But come in quickly."

He went in without a word, and began to listen to her account of his patient.

"It is a bad case, madame, a very bad case. I ought to have been sent for four days ago. If you are interested in him"—

"Interested? O Dr. Staunton! is it possible you have forgotten me? I am his mother."

"You—Marie? Can it be, indeed? I thought you dead. Tell me about yourself. My poor child,—I mean"—

"Never mind, doctor. People call me Madame de Guyon. But tell me about my son."

"Madame de Guyon? Is it possible that you are"—

"Yes,—I am the singer; but now tell me about my son."

"Marie—be strong,—strong to bear the worst. He cannot live. No human art can save him."

She sat down dry-eyed.

"When will he die?"

"We cannot tell. Perhaps in an hour,—perhaps in two. He will die before the

evening. I will stay with you to the end."

She covered her face with her hands,—not to weep, but to keep back the hard, rebellious thoughts that surged up in her bosom. In a few moments she stood up, and began to busy herself about her boy, smoothing his pillows, and laying the sheets straight.

"I heard," she said, "in England,—Arthur Durnford told me,—that he was being led away by bad companions. I am sure his heart was good. I came out, thinking to try and save him. I find him dying. O doctor, save him! You loved George Durnford, who loved me; for his sake save him. In all his life, since he was a baby,—since I gave him up to his father,—this is only the third time I have seen him. And, Dr. Staunton, he loves me still. Oh, save him!"

"Marie, I cannot."

"And why,"—she turned fiercely upon him,— "why did you not save him before, for his father's sake? Why, when you knew that he was here, and that he was not what he should be, did you not come and reason with him? Oh!" she added bitterly, "I know the reason,—after four and twenty years of England,—that his mother was a mulatto."

"I swear, Marie," said the old doctor earnestly, "that you wrong me. I came here,—I came twice. The first time,—I must tell you,—I was insulted. I came again, and he listened to me. I have been ill myself, and could not come a third time."

"Doctor," cried a weak, thin voice from the pillow, "I thank you; and again I beg your forgiveness."

Marie was at his side in a moment, kissing and fondling him.

"What shall he have, doctor? Tea,—oh! hear it comes."

Dr. Staunton ordered him some simple things.

"I have heard what you have been saying," said Philip. "I shall die to-day."

"Oh, no, my son,—oh, no!—God will not permit it."

"God knows, dear mother, that it is the best thing I can do. Perhaps that is the reason why he lets me do it. Doctor, I have a good deal to say to my mother, and very little time to say it in. Leave us for a little; but first shake hands with me."

Left alone—

"Kiss me, mother," said Philip. "Tell me that you forgive me. Mother, in my weakness, I implore your pardon."

"O Philip! with all my heart's love, I forgive you. You did not know me. You could not know I was your mother, indeed.

It was I who was wrong. There is nothing to forgive, dear."

"But there is," he said. "I knew you were my mother, directly you told me so. I *felt* it. But I was proud, and I had just — without knowing all my wickedness, it is true — robbed Arthur of his inheritance; and I could not bear to give it back again. My heart, too, was bitter with that other wrong I had committed, — O my mother! a deeper wrong, even, than what I did to you. You may forgive me for one, but you can never forgive me for the other."

"Hush! my boy. It is all forgiven."

"All?" He hardly seemed astonished, and had forgotten how she knew.

"All. Laura told me herself. She bade me take out to you her love and pardon. She implored me to bring her out with me. She says that all she wants now is to hear one loving word from you, to treasure up, and hide the memory of all the things you did and said — when you did not know what you were saying, my dear."

Philip turned his face, and wept on the pillow."

"Wipe my eyes, mother. I am so weak that I cannot even do that for myself. And now, get some paper, and write a letter for me, but call the doctor first."

Marie went to get the paper: before she came back, Dr. Staunton had administered a restorative.

"How long?" asked Philip, of the doctor.

"Don't talk too much, or you will kill yourself in an hour."

"Good!" said Philip. "Write, dear mother, —

"DEAREST WIFE, — I have but a short time now to live. With my last breath, I ask pardon of you for the grievous wrongs I have done you. No punishment could be too great for me. My mother tells me you have sent me your forgiveness. My dear, if I could tell you how I have repented — if you knew the bitter remorse that has seized me since I have been in this place! But all is over at last. The great weight is lifted. God has sent my mother with her love and your pardon. I go into the other world. I have no excuse for myself. I have been a bad man, and have led a bad life. Only, if God lets me ask any thing," —

"My son!" cried Marie.

"If God lets me ask any thing, I will ask him to bless you both. This is my only prayer — I dare have none for myself. My dear — my Laura — I am very, very sorry. Think only for the future that I

loved you all along. God bless you, my wife. Your most affectionate and penitent husband, —

'PHILIP.'

He signed it with feeble fingers, guided by Marie, and then fell back.

"I should like to write to Arthur, but I cannot. Write for me, and tell him how I repented, and ask his forgiveness. Mac-Intyre wanted me to do it eight years ago, but I refused. You will write; won't you, dear mother?"

She promised.

"Sing to me, dear mother; you sing so well. I should like to hear your voice once more. Sing me a hymn."

It was a cruel trial. She steadied herself, and sang — his head upon her shoulder — with all her fulness and richness of voice, so that the old doctor wiped his brimming eyes at the sound, —

"Abide with me! fast falls the eventide:
The darkness deepens. Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,
Life's joys grow dim, its glories fade away." —

His cheek dropped against hers. She stopped in sudden affright.

"Mother," he murmured very faintly, "is it growing dark? Is it night already?"

"O Philip!"

"I think I am dying — give my love to Laura. Kiss me, mother. Shall we meet again?"

"My boy — in heaven. I could not go there without you."

His head fell heavily forward. He was dead.

The little Indian boy was buried that same evening, in the Indian cemetery on the hillside. Small funeral rites had he, and no mourners. The man who dug his grave, and carried him under his arm to the place of sepulture, all out of the goodness of his heart and a kind of natural piety, placed a bottle on the grave, so that, should he perchance awake, there might be the means of at least slaking his thirst. And in India, perhaps his mother waited for him to come, and wondered, looking as the years went by, that he delayed so long. The life of man is short at the best; but the shorter it is, the less of bitterness he knows. Solomon said much the same thing.

Dr. Staunton staid with Marie. After the first burst of passionate grief, she began, womanlike, to find her consolation; and the thought that his last few hours

were spent in love and repentance; that the memory she would have of her son would not be of cruel insult and wrong, but of tenderness and affection, made her thank God for one great mercy at least.

They buried him next day, in the nearest English churchyard, close to his father's grave. After his feverish life, it was consoling to his mother's heart to carry with her his last few words of repentance and sorrow. She treasured them up; and when she thought of them, she forgot the cruel scene in London, his harsh words, his tones of mockery and pride, remembering only his tender love at the last, and, when all was over, his calm face set with the sweet, sad, unchanging smile of death.

They buried him as the sun went down into the sea. The fierce heat of a tropical summer day was over; and night, with its perfect calm, was stealing upon the world when the last words of the funeral service were pronounced, and the mould rattled upon the coffin of poor Philip. Marie thought of his life: of the storm and hurricane when she left him with his father, and went back alone through the forest; of the blight that his birth had thrown upon him; of his wasted energies, ruined hopes, and cruel misdeeds; and of the sweet calm and peace of the end. And it seemed to her that this tropical day was an emblem of his life, with its fierce and scorching heat, its turbulent hurricanes, and its peaceful night.

The clergyman read the service, and went away. Then Marie saw that she and the doctor were not the only mourners; for, with their hats off, and kneeling on the sward, were her two brothers, Adolphe and Alcide. Stepping reverently forward, they each threw a handful of mould upon the coffin; their first and last claim at kinship. And then the two poor fellows walked slowly away, and Marie saw them no more.

She went back to the estate, the old doctor keeping her company; and though Palmiste knew that the great singer had been to their island, and was at Fontainebleau when young Durnford died, no one knew on what errand she had come, nor what was her relationship to Philip. Dr. Staunton kept the secret well. Nor did she think it necessary to tell Adolphe Napoleon Rohan de Montmorenci that Marie was not dead, after all. What would have been the use? It was not any false shame. If all the world knew that her brothers were poor blacks, gaining a living by driving a *voiture de place*, it would have mattered nothing to her. No one in England would think the worse of her. A singer is not expected to be of unblemished family,

more than any other professional person. And what good could she do to her relations? They were happy; they had no wants that they could not satisfy; they had no ambition; they desired nothing, looked for nothing. Moreover, between them and herself so great a gulf was fixed that it could not be passed; and, whatever her childhood had been, she was now a lady. Lastly, there was this, — her story no one knew except one or two persons in England, and one person in Palmiste. There was no need for any one to know. She had suffered almost every thing that a woman can suffer, except what tortures women most, — the loss of her reputation. Blameless and pure in conduct, she had passed through the theatre without a reproach, whispered or spoken. She had learned, soon enough, the value of fair fame, and she was not disposed to give it up. Therefore she kept the secret to herself.

Turning over Philip's papers, she found among them evidences, not only of the power he undoubtedly possessed, but of thoughts which showed him in a better light, — which betrayed the causes of his wreck, the fatal moral wreck which his nature had sustained when he learned, through the man who was his evil genius, that he was illegitimate, and touched with the blood of the lower race.

Philip, until the last few months of his life, had been in the habit of writing; not for papers or magazines, partly because it never occurred to him to write for them, and partly because he did not write well enough. But his loose papers, heaped together in his desk, written on slips and fragments of paper, — sometimes in a few words, sometimes many — sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, — showed that he knew himself capable of good things, and that, though he followed the worst, he approved the better.

She burnt them all but one. This she kept, and sent to Laura. It had no title, and consisted of four stanzas — rough verses enough, but not without an element of power.

"Go, dig my grave for me —
Not where the painted sunshine lights the aisle,
Not where, through glories of the pillared pile,
The silver-voiced choir
Sing o'er the sacred bones of glorious dead
The strains of David's lyre.

Rather seek out for me
Some village churchyard, where the world comes
not;
Where moulds ignoble cover men forgot;
Where the black branching yew
O'erhangs with midnight shade the moss-grown
stones,
And hides the graves from view.

Bury me there, and write
No long inscription on a marble stone :
Only a head-cross, with these words alone —
'He dared not : therefore failed.'
Let the dishonor of a coward heart,
So set forth, so be veiled.

Let no man weep for me :
Rather rejoice that one whose will was weak
No longer cumbered earth ; and, when they speak
(Not with breath bated), say,
God made the world for those who dare be strong :
Well that the weak decay !"

She kept these lines only, and on his grave set up the head-cross he wished, with his own words, "He dared not : therefore failed." Under them she wrote — "P.D. Aged twenty-six."

Over his grave, and his father's, wave the tall filiaos, with the long, mournful sough, singing a perpetual lament over the sins and sorrows of the dead. In this forgotten corner of the world, — no longer a memory even in Palmiste, though few years have as yet gone by since he died, — he lies at rest. Arthur and his wife, and their children, will perhaps be laid beside him, but not Marie. Another grave is hers, — a wider one, but I think quite as peaceful.

She sent Philip's last words to Laura and Arthur by the next mail. She staid to finish what she had to do ; left presents for her people, to be given by Dr. Staunton, and embarked again for England in the first homeward-bound ship, happier, if more sad, than when she arrived but a short month before.

CHAPTER XLI.

"MY dearest daughter," — it was the last letter, the one letter, that Laura ever had from Marie, — "I send you Philip's last words. It is all over, my child. I cannot write about him yet ; but he kissed me at the last, and we prayed together. I have given money to a man, who promises to keep his grave, and to tend the flowers that I have planted. There is a cross at its head, with his initials, and a line that I found in his desk, — 'He dared not : therefore failed.' It is the story of his life, — a poor life, a sinful life, a sorrowful life. He saw what was good, and took what was bad, because it seemed the easiest. In all his faults, he tried to make a compromise between the two. My poor boy ! He looked so handsome, though he was pale and worn at the last ; and, as he lay dead, his mouth was set with a sweeter smile than I had ever seen on it in life. Alas ! I never saw him smile. I love to think of him so ; and to feel that he is with One

who is far more merciful than we two women.

"I am delayed by all this business, but I return by the next mail.

"Strange presentiments fall upon me. I cannot sleep at night. If I do, I have dreams and visions ; and I feel as if I shall never see you again. But I am not unhappy. God has forgiven us both, — my boy and me. I say that again and again ; and I comfort myself with thinking how my Philip laid his arms about my neck, and kissed me, at the end.

"One thing I forgot to tell you. You are now the owner of Fontainebleau. You must give it back to Arthur. Make him take it. What is mine is yours, and I am rich. Should I never reach England, all is bequeathed to you.

"I enclose you a lock of Philip's hair. I cut it from his head when I took my last look at his poor, white, dead face. I put up one of mine with it. Tie them up together, dear child, and put them in a locket. Here, too, is a flower from his grave. And, with it all, his last letter. God bless you, my daughter. Perhaps my forebodings may come to nothing.

"MARIE."

A wild day off the Cape, where the gales are fiercer, and the waves longer, than in any other part of the ocean. In the midst of the warring winds and mighty waves a gallant ship, tossing and groaning as every successive mountain of gray-green water strikes her. The sailors are holding on by the ropes, the man at the helm is lashed to his post, the captain is giving orders clinging to the davits, and all the passengers, except two or three who are on deck and watching the waves, are below in the saloon. The storm has raged without intermission for three days. They have been driven steadily south, far out of the track of any ship. It is bitterly cold. The men have been all day trying to get up cargo and lighten the vessel. The engines labor heavily. Every now and then the screw, as the ship's stern is lifted out of the water, whizzes round against the air, with a sound that seems to terrify the ship ; for she gives a shiver, and then makes another bound forwards, and gallantly tries to right herself. Now and again a passenger tries to get hold of the captain or one of the officers, and essays to find a crumb of comfort in the assurance that things cannot get worse, and therefore must change soon ; but the officers wear anxious faces, and the captain shakes his head when he talks to his chief. Hour after hour goes on, and things get worse, — the wind higher, the waves longer. One after the other, the pas-

sengers creep below into the saloon, and try to cheer each other, with a sickening fear at their hearts. Marie is there, sitting with clasped hands and calm face and downcast eyes. The women around her are crying and weeping; the men are sitting with haggard faces, or sometimes looking at each other with a smile; and the storm grows worse. Presently she feels a hand catching at her arm. It is a young girl, going to England to be married. She had not spoken to Marie before. Now, in her misery, she looks round, and finds hers the only face with any courage upon it. Marie rouses herself at the touch, and takes the girl into her arms.

"My poor child," she whispers.

And at the sound of her piteous voice, the girl breaks into a flood of weeping and lamentation.

"Madame de Guyon," she cries, "do you think we are going to be drowned?"

"I don't know, my dear. God knows. He will do what is best for us."

"Pray for us, Madame de Guyon."

Marie prayed, — whispering her prayer in the girl's ear. The storm grew louder and fiercer. She had to cling to the back of the saloon-seat on which she was resting; and, in the middle of her prayer, an awful crash was heard. The child — she was little more — shrieked with terror. Marie clasped her the more firmly.

"God, our Father," she whispered, "send us what is best for us."

There was a great stamping and noise upon deck, for the mainmast had been carried by the board; but it was finally cleared away; and presently more noise befell them when the foremast followed. Those in the cabin trembled and shrieked. One or two of the men got brandy, and drank freely to keep up their courage. Four ex-diggers from California sat down to have a final gamble, and, holding the cards firmly in one hand and the brandy in the other, prepared themselves so to leave the world.

But the end was not yet. This was the forenoon. The wind abated towards one o'clock; and there seemed a prospect, however distant, of getting through. The diggers gave up their gambling, and grumbled, being half drunk, over the winnings and losings. Those who had been most terrified assumed an air of valor; and the women left off crying. Only the girl clung to Marie, and begged her not to leave her again. The long day crept on. About five, a pretence was made at dinner — whatever could be found to eat being put out. But by this time a good many of the men were drunk, and lying helpless about the seats on the floor; and the women could

not eat. The captain came down, — a cheery, hearty man. He looked with infinite disgust at his drunken passengers, and hastened to say a few words to Marie and the young lady.

"You seem brave, Madame de Guyon," he said; "and so I tell you, that, though we may pull through, I do not think we shall. If the wind rises again to-night, we shall have a rough time of it. Cheer up, my pretty," he said to the girl, "we must hope for the best. And here's the doctor to look after you. He can save us from a good deal, if not from storm and tempest. As for storm and tempest," he muttered, "only the Lord can save us from those; and I don't think the Lord will."

Then the doctor — a young fellow of five, and twenty, as brave as if he had fifty lives — sat down and talked to them, making a rough dinner all the while, and trying to cheer up the poor lassie, but without much effect. Presently the sun set, — or, rather, the night fell, — and darkness came upon them. The stewardess lit one or two of the saloon lamps, and relapsed into a sort of torpor which had fallen upon her. The doctor tried to rouse her up. It was no use. She lifted up her head, and moaned, —

"I've been a great sinner — oh, I've been a great sinner!"

"Well, come," said the doctor kindly, — "we all know that of course; but you might as well do your duty all the same."

But she refused to move. So the doctor tried himself to minister to his two ladies, without much effect. Indeed, there was little to be done for them.

Marie raised her head, and listened. Then she whispered to the doctor, —

"The wind is rising — I feel it coming."

The doctor shuddered. He could distinguish nothing beyond the dull roar of the waves and the struggling of the ship; for the wind had almost died away. But he listened intently. Presently it came, — first a shrill whistle in the shrouds, and then a sort of heavy, dull blow to starboard; and the good ship staggered and reeled.

"God help us!" said the doctor softly. "We shall not get through this night."

Marie and the girl clung to each other.

"Come below," said Marie, "if there is time."

He nodded, and went out into the black, howling night.

"Madame," said the girl.

"Call me Marie, dear."

"Marie, call me Lucy. If there were only a clergyman."

"Let me be your clergyman, dear Lucy. God hears us in the storm as much as in the calm. We want no clergyman."

"But — but — oh! I loved him so much,

— more than God! Do you think he will forgive me? Marie, do you think I can be forgiven?"

"God forgives us all," said Marie. "He has forgiven me. And God has taken my son, and is going to take me. He has forgiven us both, — me and my boy too. Do you not think he will forgive you?"

"Pray for me again," sobbed the girl.

Marie prayed. Two or three of the women, — they were soldiers' wives, poor things, second-class passengers, who had crept aft for better shelter, — seeing the girl on her knees, and Marie bending over her, slid and crawled over to her, and kneeled round her, while Marie prayed for all.

In the midst of her prayer there was a confused rush and gurgling of waters, and the ship seemed suddenly to stop. In the roar of the tempest, they hardly perceived that it was her engines which had stopped. And Marie, looking up, saw the doctor making his way towards her. Catching one of the iron pillars of the saloon, he bent over, and whispered in her ear, —

"The ship will be down in ten minutes."

She nodded, and drew from her breast a little packet, which she handed him. He put it in his pocket; and then, with tears in his eyes, kissed her upturned face, and disappeared up the companion ladder. None of the women noticed it.

Ten minutes afterwards, he found himself clinging to a rope on the deck. Next to him was the chief officer.

"Where's the skipper?" he shouted through the storm.

"Gone overboard. All the rest, too, I think, with the almighty wave that put out our engine-fires. Doctor, don't be drowned like a heathen. Say you didn't mean what you said the other night."

"Not I," shouted the doctor. "If I've been wrong, and there is something to come, I won't go sneaking into it with a miserable apology."

The chief officer said no more; because at that moment another wave, striking the ship, washed them both off together into the black sea.

The doctor, recovering his senses, found himself clinging to some portion of the wreck. How he got hold of it, by what instinct, how in the crash and roar when his senses left him he still managed to hold to it, he never knew. It was a black night, and he was alone on the waves. He looked round, but could see nothing.

The morning found him still living. The storm had subsided, and the sun broke fair and warm.

Two days afterwards, a homeward-bound ship saw an object tossing on the sea, and

made out that it was a man and a piece of wreck. They lowered a boat. The man was breathing, but that was all. They took him on board, and gave him restoratives. He came to his senses presently, and told his story. And the doctor was the only survivor of the ship. The captain and the crew, Marie and little Lucy, and the passengers, had all gone down together. When they touched at Plymouth, the doctor landed, and went straight to Venn with the packet that Marie had put into his hands. It contained nothing but a few memorials of Philip.

Laura had lost her husband and her mother.

CHAPTER XLII.

LAURA continued to stay with Sukey. She made no new friends, and no change in her life. Hartley came to see her nearly every day, and the old visit daily was so restored, with the difference that he was the scholar.

All her beauty had come back to her: roses to her cheeks, the life and lightness of youth, the sweetness and grace, doubled and trebled by the lessons of sorrow, with that additional charm for which we have no other word than ladyhood.

All were happy, except Sukey, who watched her brother day after day, with feelings growing more and more irritated. At last she spoke. He was in a particularly good temper that morning. Laura was in her own room, dressing to go out with him.

"It's ridiculous, Hartley," cried Sukey, losing all control over herself.

"What is ridiculous, Sukey?"

"I say it is ridiculous, the way you are going on. How long is it to last? And people talking. Even Anne says it's too bad of you."

"My own Sukey, what is it?"

"It's Laura. Has the man got eyes in his head? Are you stupid? Are you blind?"

Hartley turned red.

"Tell me, Sukey — speak plain. Tell me what it is you mean?"

"O Hartley! You are the most foolish creature that ever was, my dear brother." She laughed hysterically. "The child loves the very ground you walk upon. She dreams of you, — she is never happy except with you."

"Don't, Sukey, don't" — He began walking about the room. "If you should be wrong. Am I to lose the happiness I have every day?"

"Lose it! And a second time, this non-

sense! I haven't patience with the man. While the prettiest and best girl in the world is dying of love for him, he talks about losing happiness!"

"Go send her here, Sukey, dear. It's true our grandfather was a bishop, and hers was a Gray's-inn laundress — no, that was her grandmother." He looked at her with a smile playing about his lips.

"It may be remarkable, Hartley," said Sukey, "to quote yourself, but it is true, that in our family there are two grandfathers, one of whom was not unconnected with the wholesale" — here she made a wry face — "the wholesale glue trade."

"Go away, Sukey," he laughed, giving her that very unusual thing from him, a kiss. He had never, by the way, been very frugal over his kisses for little Lollie, in the old time. "Go away, and send me my little girl."

She came, dancing down the stairs and singing, ready for her walk, in a dainty little costume, all her own invention, and bringing the sunshine into the room with her.

"Here I am, Mr. Venn. Are you impatient? I have only been ten minutes. Where shall we go?"

"I am always impatient, Lollie." He took her hand, and held it for a moment in his.

"Child, I am more than impatient. I am discontented. You give me all the joy I have in life; but you withhold some — the greatest."

She began to tremble, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Give me the greatest, my darling. Never to be separated from you, — to have you always with me. Give me the right to take you in my arms, as I used to do when you were a little child. Be my wife, Lollie."

She looked in his face. The eyes were smiling, — the face was grave. No wild tempestuous passion such as she might have remembered, only that memory seemed all dead. No fierce light of a burning fire in those eyes, — only the light of a full, deep love which nothing could ever destroy.

She threw her arms round his neck, and laid her cheek to his.

"Mr. Venn, — Mr. Venn, I have never loved anybody but you."

What could he say? There was nothing to say. Five minutes afterwards, Sukey, hearing no voice, opened the door. They were still standing in that same posture, kissing each other, as Sukey afterwards told Anne, "like a pair of babies."

"My dearest," said Sukey, "I have always prayed for this from the beginning. Hartley, you must tell Anne. Ring the

bell. Anne, you will be glad to hear that Mr. Hartley is going to marry Mrs. Durnford."

Anne sat down, and wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Now, I'm content to go," she said. "O Mr. Hartley, Mr. Hartley! — and she never tired of hearing how I dandled you on my knees when you were a little baby a month old. God bless and keep you both, my dears!"

That evening the Chorus assembled. Lynn and Jones arrived nearly at the same moment. Both seemed strangely pre-occupied and nervous. Jones could not sit down. He walked about, upset glasses, and comported himself as one under the influence of strong emotion. Venn only seemed perfectly tranquil.

"What is it, Jones?" he asked at last.

"My play came out last night at the Lyceum."

"Oh!" said Lynn; "and failed, of course."

"Never mind," said Venn, "you can easily write another. After all, what matters little disappointments? Mere incidents in our life, giving flavor to what else would be monotonous."

"Yes," said Jones, "if one may quote Byron on such an occasion as the present —

'Oh! weep not for me, though the Bride of Abydos
Wildly calls upon Laura to slumber no more;
Though from Delos to Crete, from Olynthus to
Cnidus,
The canoe of the Corsair is hugging the shore.

Oh! weep not for me, though on Marathon's mountain,
The chiefs are at thimble-erig, as is their wont;
Though beneath the broad plane tree, by Helicon's fountain,
The languishing Dudu is murmuring "Don't,""

"We will not weep, Jones. Sit down and be cheerful."

"I am a humbug," cried Jones. "Oh! why were you not there? It was a great success. The house screamed. I have succeeded at last — at last." He sat down, and his voice broke almost into a sob as he added, "I have written to Mary."

"This will not do," said Venn. "He violates every rule of this Chorus. He brings his private joys into what is sacred to private sorrows. Lynn, he must be expelled."

"Stay a moment," said Lynn. "I, too, have something to communicate."

"What? You, too? Have you then?" —

"No: I have accepted a judgeship in Trinidad. I start next month."

Venn looked round him with astonishment. Then he turned red and confused.

"I, too," he confessed, "have my secret to communicate. Yes, my friends, the Chorus is dissolved. I am going to be married."

They looked at him nervously.

"I am to marry my little girl."

"Thank God!" said Lynn.

"Why, who else could I marry? There is but one woman in the world, so far as I am concerned. We shall be married immediately, and go to Italy till we are tired of it; then we shall come back again. There will be no wedding fuss, or breakfast, or other annoyances, — unless Sukey likes to come here for a final kidney."

"And the Opuscula?"

Venn winced.

"I shall begin their careful revision with a view to publication — at my own expense. Lollie is rich, you know," he added simply. "Besides, it will be good to have something to do. In the morning, we shall roam about and enjoy the sunshine. In the evening, I shall correct the manuscripts while Lollie plays to me. You see, I am not in any hurry about publishing. Perhaps in ten years' time you may see an announcement of their appearance."

"The last night of the Chorus," he went on. "My friends, there stands before us the venerable bottle of champagne which was brought in the very first night of the newly-established Chorus, now twelve years ago. This night must witness the drinking of that wine. Aged and mellowed, it is doubtless by this time in splendid condition. I would Arthur were here to join us. Jones, get the champagne glasses from the cupboard. Lynn, my boy, help me to remove the wire. Are we ready? Now, in the sparkle of the generous wine behold the brightness of the future. Our youth will be renewed. We shall live again in the sunshine of success and happiness. Behold!"

He removed his hand from the cork. It did not immediately fly out, and he had re-

course to the vulgar expedient of pulling it out with a corkscrew. After great exercise of strength, it came out with a dull thud.

He said nothing; but while all three crowded round the table, he poured out the wine. It was flat, dead, and sour. Not a single sparkle in the glass.

They looked at each other.

Lynn laughed bitterly.

"It is an emblem of life," he said. "Nothing compensates. We have wasted our youth."

Venn stared vacantly at the unhappy wine, which seemed an omen of bad luck.

"I believe it was bad at the beginning," he murmured. "It came from the public-house."

Jones, however, brought his clinched fist upon the table.

"Emblem of life? Compensation? Rubbish!" he cried. "We have waited, we have suffered. What of it? The suffering is gone, the waiting is over. It is no more than the *carache* I had when I was a boy. Even the memory of it is almost faded. Venn, Lynn, this infernal bottle is the emblem of our hopes and disappointed ambitions. Go, cursed symbol of defeat!"

He hurled the bottle into the fireplace, and threw the glasses after it.

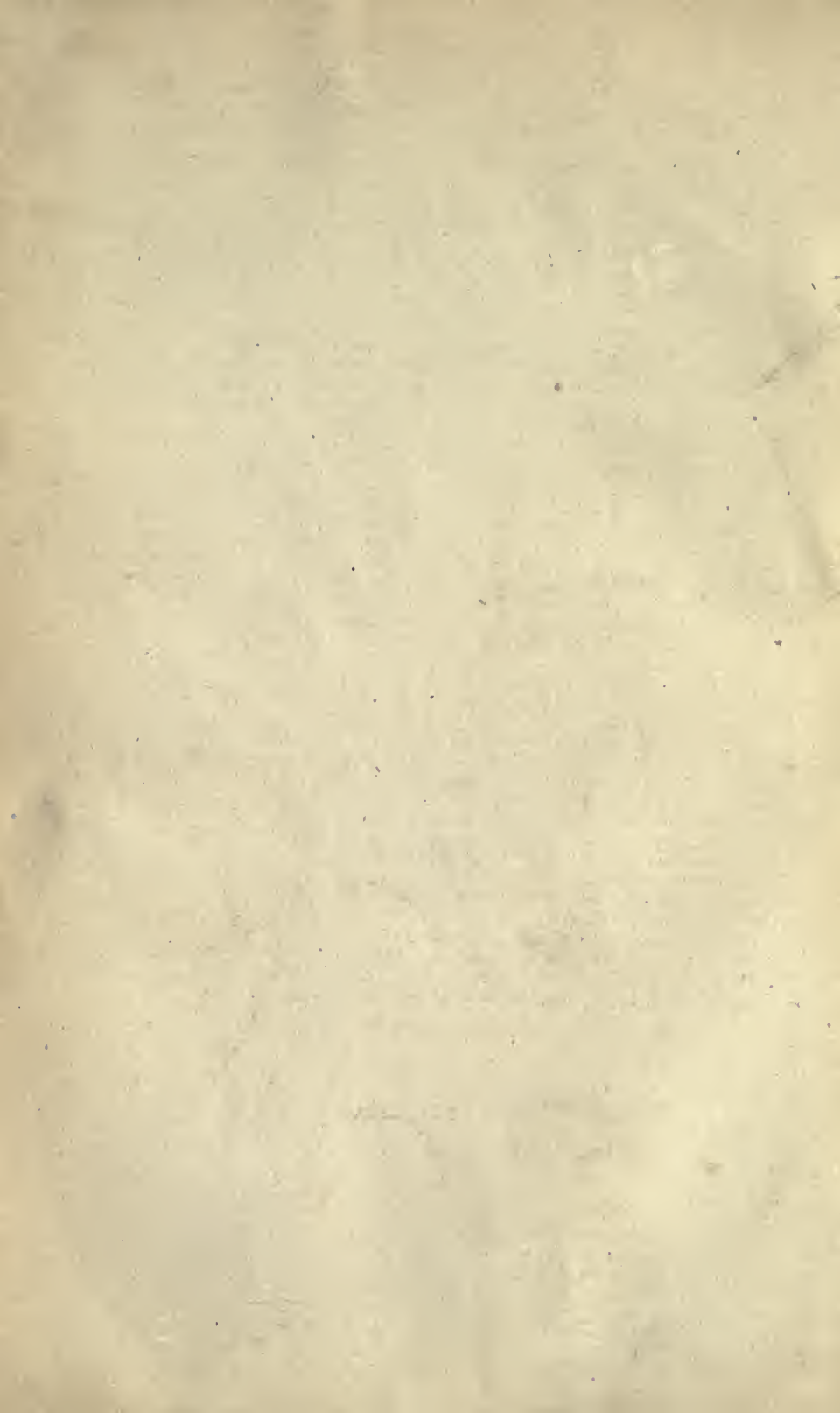
"And now, Venn, if you like, I will get you some new champagne, and drink to your happiness, and to yours, Lynn, and to my own. In the words of the poet, —

'Look not for comfort in the champagne glasses,
They foam, and fizz, and die;
Only remember that all sorrow passes,
As childhood's ear-aches fly.

At the great Banquet where the Host dispenses,
Ask not, but silent wait;
And when at last your helping turn commences,
Complain not 'tis too late.

And see, O Chorus of the disappointed!
Ourselves not quite forgot;
And after aimless play and times disjoined,
Sunshine and love our lot."

THE END.



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A Novel.

By JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON,

AUTHOR OF

"LIVE IT DOWN," "NOT DEAD YET," "OLIVE BLAKE'S GOOD WORK," &c., &c.



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A WORD TO THE READER.

WHILE every one admits that truth is stranger than fiction, novelists are often censured for producing fictions which are stranger than truth. Against my "Not Dead Yet" (published in 1864 and written in 1863) it was objected that its principal incidents were too improbable for credence. Ere long the famous Tichborne case afforded *facts* which corresponded with singular exactness to the most daring fancies of that story. In 1867, while the Tichborne case was in the first stages of its career in Chancery, an essayist observed that had "Not Dead Yet" followed the Claimant's appearance by two years, instead of preceding it by that time, no critic would have hesitated to declare it a close reproduction of many incidents of that *cause célèbre*.

Again, the only objection urged against my "Woman in Spite of Herself," by its able and abundantly eulogistic critics, was that Felicia Avalon's career exceeded the limits of probability and possibility. It was said that no woman could achieve the particular imposture attributed to the heroine. The author, however, was indebted for that part of the romance to facts which occurred not many years since in a rural parish of England.

The general interest in "Lottie Darling" will not be lessened by the author's assurance to the reader that its strangest incidents and positions have been taken from true domestic history.

A WORD TO THE READER

It is a common error to suppose that the only way to get the most out of a book is to read it straight through from beginning to end. This is not true. The best way to get the most out of a book is to read it in a way that suits your own needs and interests. For example, if you are interested in a particular subject, you may want to read the chapters on that subject first. Or, if you are interested in the author's style, you may want to read the introduction and the conclusion first. The point is that you should read the book in a way that makes sense to you. This will help you to understand the book better and to get the most out of it.

Another common error is to suppose that the only way to get the most out of a book is to read it very carefully. This is also not true. The best way to get the most out of a book is to read it in a way that is comfortable for you. If you are reading a book that is very difficult, you may want to read it more slowly and carefully. But if you are reading a book that is easy to read, you may want to read it more quickly and casually. The point is that you should read the book in a way that is comfortable for you. This will help you to understand the book better and to get the most out of it.

Finally, it is a common error to suppose that the only way to get the most out of a book is to read it all the time. This is also not true. The best way to get the most out of a book is to read it in a way that fits into your own schedule. If you are very busy, you may want to read the book in short, regular intervals. But if you have more time, you may want to read the book in longer, more irregular intervals. The point is that you should read the book in a way that fits into your own schedule. This will help you to understand the book better and to get the most out of it.

LOTTIE DARLING.

BOOK I.—LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

PACKING DAY.

IN the month of June, some twenty-five years since, there was a day of unusual excitement and bodily exertion at 145 Hanover Square, Brighton—the house of Miss Angelica Constantine's school. Not a lesson was learned or said on that day by any one of Miss Constantine's girls. It was no day for scholastic exercises of any kind. The professors had said good-bye to the seat of learning for several weeks; and there would have been a mild mutiny of the pupils had Miss Spider, or any other subordinate person, told them to open a book for purposes of instruction.

It was "packing day." To-morrow would be "breaking-up day," when, to the great animation of Hanover Square, and the lively interest of the east cliff, the Old Steyne, and the whole route of progress, a procession of eight or nine flies—each carriage containing four happy faces—would convey "the Constantines" (as the girls of the school were pleased to call themselves), together with an adequate staff of chaperons, to the Brighton railway station, where two superb saloon carriages would be ready for them.

Miss Constantine has a love of old fashions and names. She would as soon call her school "a college," as call her half-years and quarters "terms" and "half-terms." The young people neither "relinquish their studies" nor "resume" them; they "break up" and "begin work again." She knows nothing of "vacations" and "recesses;" it is enough for her to have "holidays," and be thankful for them. In her affection for antiquated practices she likes her children, toward the close of each half-year, to keep paper scores and wooden tallies of the days till the holidays. Instead of "retiring from their scene of mental development," her girls "go home." She insists on keeping to the ancient times and seasons for holidays. It has been urged upon her that it would be more convenient for those of her girls who have brothers at public schools if she made her summer holidays a month or so later. But she will not consent to the revolutionary proposal. She must have her Mid-

summer and Christmas "holidays"—six weeks at Midsummer and six weeks at Christmas. So also at 145 Hanover Square, "packing day" is "packing day." Any "Constantine" in residence, who should so far abuse its "English privilege" as to call it "a day of preparation for departure," would be laughed into blushes by the whole school, almost before the words were out of her mouth.

It is no easy matter to "pack" thirty young ladies—i. e., pack their wearing apparel and portable property in eight hours. Say that each girl has four boxes, great or small, of wood or leather. One hundred and twenty boxes can not be neatly filled with dainty raiment and curious bits of millinery in so brief a time, unless each damsel goes to work and is her own packer. How could the task be accomplished properly by four or five female servants? If the work could be done by a nurse, an under-nurse, and three house-maids, would it be right or otherwise than egregiously unjust that the young ladies should be denied the fun and excitement of "packing themselves?" Portage and its exigencies must also be considered in making arrangements for the packing up of a girl's school. It would never do to allow boxes of the larger kinds to be filled in upper rooms with whole hundred-weights of silk and linen, so that no one but a professional porter with enormous shoulders and a knot on his head could bring them down stairs. It would be in the highest degree indecorous to suffer a lot of clumsy, rude men porters, with huge boots on their noisy feet, and preposterous nails in their thick soles, to go climbing and clambering up stairs and down stairs, into chambers which even the wandering goosie-goosie of the nursery rhyme would not have presumed to enter. Clearly, in a well-ordered girls' school on packing day, all ponderous and large receptacles for clothing must, in the first place, be put empty and open on the ground-floor and first floor of the house, and be there neatly filled, so that, on being locked and corded, and "quite finished," they may be conveyed without riot, or risk of damage to painted walls, from the said lower floors to the luggage-van appointed to rumble them off to the railway station.

On the certain bright day, of the already mentioned twenty-five-years distant month, Miss Constantine's girls had been hard at it, packing with extravagant zeal and enjoyment, and running up and down long flights of stone stairs with burdens of goods, light and "fluffy" enough, no doubt, by nature, but still weighty to young arms when carried on vast tea-trays in prodigious quantities. They had breakfasted at eight o'clock, and packed energetically from nine o'clock till one, talking and laughing all the while in the English style, as school-girls will talk and laugh when "English privilege" permits them to use their mother-tongue. At one o'clock they had knocked off for an hour, and then, after a hasty dinner, at which, from mere gayety of heart and innocent hilarity, they broke divers local rules of decorum, and otherwise misbehaved themselves in an altogether young lady-like fashion, they had packed away again till half-past four o'clock, when the labor of packing was carried as near completion as it was possible to carry it on the eve of the day of departure. Every box that could be "finished off," and would not be required to receive a "few last things" on the following morning, had been locked and corded.

Fifteen minutes later, seven girls might have been seen refreshing their toilets and touching up their coiffures in a room on the highest floor of the house. The room was long and lofty, and through its three open windows came the fresh breeze and the faintly audible music of a merry sea. The apartment was furnished with seven narrow single beds, canopied at their heads with white and blue draperies. By the side of each bed was a small toilet-table, with a square looking-glass fastened immediately over it to the wall. On the middle of the carpet, which covered the space of the floor between the two rows of beds, stood a grand table for the toilet, provided with eau-de-Cologne bottles and a standing glass, by which the wearer of a robe of state could examine and arrange its folds critically.

Miss Constantine is a strong advocate of looking-glasses, as aids for the formation of style and the development of feminine qualities. She maintains that, while slatternly damsels can not be too frequently reminded of their untidiness by mirrors, good-looking girls, who take proper pride in their appearance, ought to be rewarded by seeing at every turn how well they look. As for the mirror's influence in stimulating personal vanity, Miss Constantine is inclined to think that a woman ought to delight in her personal charms. Experience has taught her to regard with favor the pleasure which comely girls usually derive from a consciousness of their attractiveness. The maidens who have caused her the most trouble and anxiety were the few young people whom she could not educate to set themselves off in daily life to the best advantage. Of course there are inordinately vain girls; but no good ever comes to them from a discipline that denies

them opportunities of studying their graces, and growing to some extent weary of them by frequent observation. Holding these views respecting the mirror, the school-mistress provides her pupils with small glasses for individual use in matters of detail, and grand glasses for the survey of general effects.

The seven girls of this long, bright, freshly furnished dormitory were the eldest girls of the school. It was the last day of their last half-year at school. They had been confirmed by the Bishop of Chichester three months since, and on returning to their homes they would be introduced to society at parties of state, and "come out" as blooming candidates for matrimonial preferment.

Had it not been for that wild, prankish mad-cap, Eugie Bridlemere—a tall, showy, dashing girl, whose tongue was even longer than her waist—they would have gone from their toilets to the tea-room with demure looks and praiseworthy orderliness. But under the excitements of packing, and of looking forward to her speedy liberation from scholastic bondage, Eugie's mercurial spirits had risen to a dangerous height; and on leaving the "grand mirror," in which she had glanced approvingly at her length of muslin skirt, and at the bright ribbon set coquettishly in her mouse-colored hair, she was bent on mischief. Her madness was infectious, and in less than two minutes these "privileged girls," who had been allowed to sit up till ten o'clock the whole half-year through, and permitted on Sundays to have tea by themselves in Miss Constantine's sumptuous drawing-room, were in the full enjoyment of a strange and unprecedented outburst of wildness. Seven choice bits of equine blood, that had slipped from their stalls and escaped to the park, could not have enjoyed more thoroughly a free scamper over the green turf, with none to spur or check them, than these outrageously naughty damsels enjoyed their conversational gallop over a piece of untried ground.

It was all Eugie's doing, though to this day the other six declare that they were every whit as bad as their leader. She was a terrible child. Miss Constantine had had many a smart tussle with her. To quell Eugie, in times long past, when the girl was still in her fourteenth year, Miss Constantine had devised the "fearful punishment of the dinner napkin," a discipline that required the offender to sit all through dinner with a white napkin on her head, in the presence of the whole school. It is needless to say that even Eugie was subdued to manageableness by some half-dozen subjections to this humiliation, and that so awful a punishment was never employed for any but extreme offenders. Miss Constantine is no austere ruler, prone to carry the quelling process too far on any one, or likely to lessen the effect of a capital correction by injudicious use. Moreover, the school-mistress liked her pupil of a difficult temper, and, far from wishing to crush her spirit, saw that the girl's gayety con-

tributed to the moral health of her companions. When the general courage of the school drooped, Eugie Bridlemere had often come to the relief of her comrades, and in a trice had raised them from despondency to mirth by audacious speeches that no other girl would have dared to utter.

"Heigh-ho!" cried Eugenie Bridlemere, "so this game is played out. We sha'n't have another packing day. To-morrow we shall have done with school. Our education is finished."

"Mine is not," responded Josephine Gough, a short, thickly built, and severely practical girl—known, at this present date of her mature life, for exertions to liberate womankind from bondage.

"Surely, Finny," retorted Eugie, "you don't mean to say that you have not enough learning, and that you mean to burden yourself by systematic indulgence in sound literature when you have left school?"

"I don't mean to *burden* myself, in any disagreeable sense of the word," Josephine (shortened into Finny) returned, pugnaciously; "but I am of opinion that a woman should systematically train herself, so that her mind may attain all the strength, breadth, and depth of a perfect intellect. When a girl leaves school, she is only at the threshold of such an education as a woman should have."

"Quite wrong, my dear. Education is a mistake, the grandest of all mistakes," Eugie Bridlemere replied, saucily, and with an intensely comical air of worldly knowingness. "It stupefies women of natural brilliance; and enables dull, plodding creatures to pass themselves off as better than they really are. Of course self-education, as it is called, is the right thing for stupid simpletons who have the ambition to figure as intellectual people. But as I am brilliant, imaginative, vivacious, I have had enough of useful literature. Henceforth I shall read nothing but the best novels. Of course I shall skim the newspapers."

"I am going to give my mind for the next two years to Political Economy," Josephine answered, stubbornly. She was the daughter of a hard-headed capitalist of Manchester, who, when indisposition or the badness of the weather kept his family from church on Sundays, was accustomed to read them a chapter from Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," instead of a sermon.

"And I," retorted Eugie, mimicking her opponent's voice and manner, "for the next two years mean to give my mind to billiards."

This was too much for the gravity of the girl's hearers, who broke into a ringing peal of silver laughter. Eugie's determination to turn billiard-player was inexpressibly ludicrous at a time when the billiard-table was no common article of domestic furniture.

The laughter having subsided, Eugie, encouraged by the success of her last sally, perpetrated another audacity.

"But I am going in for something better

than billiards. Girls, I have a piece of news for you. I am going to be married."

"To be married!" her six hearers exclaimed in one breath. "Impossible!"

"Why impossible, my dears? Am not I good enough looking? or sufficiently well educated? Must I wait till I have read Finny's great authors, Mr. Adam Smith and Mr. John Stuart Mill?"

"Do tell us all about it," was the entreaty of six voices.

"I want you all to be my brides-maids. I have no sisters, or any one else I wish to attend me to the altar; and six is such a nice number—picturesque, but not embarrassing."

"How delightful!" ejaculated the six brides-maids elect.

"You all promise?"

"Of course we do," the six exclaimed, enthusiastically. Lottie Darling added, "On the understanding that mamma gives me leave."

"That's understood, Lottie, as a matter of course."

"Then it's agreed that, mammas and papas approving, you six will be my brides-maids."

"Of course, of course—agreed, agreed!"

"Then come and join hands on the bargain."

In an instant the six girls had leaped to the middle of the room, and joined hands with Eugie Bridlemere, who stood before the high toilet-glass, half a head taller than the tallest of them.

"Now, then," said Eugie, authoritatively, taking six tender little hands in her own two hands, "repeat the promise after me—word by word. 'Out of our love for Eugie Bridlemere, spinster, and out of our admiration of her brilliance and many high qualities, and also out of our esteem for the honorable estate of matrimony, we six 'privileged Constantines' do solemnly promise that, our papas and mammas approving, we will attend as brides-maids at the approaching wedding of our excellent friend, Eugenie. Amen.'"

"Speak out, Lottie Darling," insisted Eugie, as the girls were separating their hands; "you did not say 'Amen' like the others."

"I whispered it, Eugie," pleaded Lottie Darling, blushing slightly, while her lovely face wore a look of entreaty.

"Why did not you say it out loud?"

"Of course it would not be wrong to say it; but—but, I don't like playing with prayer-book words," Lottie explained simply, as she retired from the group and resumed her seat at the head of her bed.

"Well, as you whispered it, that will do. You are a pet as well as a darling, though you are morbidly conscientious."

"But what are we to wear?" inquired Millie Travers, a piquant little *blonde*, who certainly was not deficient in care for her personal charms, and who had already imagined "a perfectly charming dress for the brides-maids," a costume, of course, whose colors would bring out the witchery of light hair, blue eyes, and a delicately soft, pink-and-white complexion.

"It will be time enough to settle that," Eugie responded, with staggering coolness and a sudden assumption of indifference to the whole matter, "when I shall be engaged."

"What?" from five slightly indignant voices, "are you not engaged?"

"Of course not. I never said that I was."

"You asked us to be your brides-maids."

"And I hope you'll keep your promise. I shall soon prove what your promise is good for. In the mean time I am as engagement free as ever Queen Elizabeth was."

"Preposterous!" urged Maud Morrison, a haughty being, who prided herself on her papa's position in Cheshire, and never forgot that she was great-niece of the Earl of Boxhill. "You have been trifling with us!"

"My dearest Maud, why preposterous? It is against the rules of the school for a girl to be engaged while she is at 145 Hanover Square. And I hope that I am far too good a girl to break a law of the school."

Slight laughter, indicating that Eugie would not have much difficulty in making her friends forgive her for the trick she had just played them.

"But," urged Josephine Gough, severely, "it is not usual for a girl to talk, or even to think, about marriage, until she is suitably engaged."

"True, Finny," returned the incorrigible offender, "but then I am not a *usual* girl. I am a damsel of a very *unusual* kind. In point of fact, I am a social eccentricity. And surely a feminine professor of political economy has no right to object to social eccentricities!"

"I can't approve your conduct, Eugie," Finny replied, steadily, but with diminished severity. "And as I made my promise on a misunderstanding, resulting from your delusive statement of the case, I don't regard myself as in any way bound by it."

"Of course not," Eugie admitted with frankness, and all the more readily because she had no strong desire for the Gough to be one of her brides-maids. "That's good law. A promise obtained by fraudulent artifice is not binding on the maker. That's precisely what my cousin Tom, a barrister of the Temple, said when he broke with me last holidays, and would not ride to Sharsted Abbey, on discovering that I had led him by an innocent artifice into thinking that Kate Nugent was there."

"Can artifice be altogether innocent?" inquired Avila Mildmay, daughter of Mildmay, the Regius Professor of Moral Philosophy.

"As for the man whom I shall vow to honor, and shall do my best not to disobey," continued the flippant Eugie, "I have not the slightest notion who he is or where he is. I have never seen him, that I am aware of. No one, to my knowledge, has ever breathed a word to him about me. But this much I can tell you, he is a crack cavalry colonel, has raven-black hair and piercing eyes, a good estate, aristocratic face, and faultless taste in dress. I won't marry a civilian, or a lout, or a younger brother, or

any one who is not of the best style and highest fashion."

It was impossible to be angry with Eugie for more than two minutes at a time.

Seeing that her companions had completely recovered their good humor, she cried,

"And now, girls, that you know the kind of man I mean to marry, assemble around me once again, and, sitting on the floor, tell me strange stories of your future husbands, how some are courtly priests, some counsel learned in the law, some chiefs of Britain's commerce, some lords of ancient halls, all enamored."

The proposal was acceptable. Four of the girls grouped themselves on the carpet round their "spirit of fun," as Eugie was called in the school; and though Josephine Gough would not condescend to assume so lowly a position, she almost made herself one of the group by sitting on the foot-end of the bed nearest to them. As for Lottie Darling, she retained her place near her pillow, but her radiant face showed that, though slightly scandalized by the improprieties of the hour, she was not unfavorable to Eugie's proposal for more mischief.

Seizing from the central toilet-table an ivory-handled hair-brush, which she proceeded to use as though it were a chairman's official hammer, Eugie tapped the floor with the *bâton*, as she exclaimed,

"Attention—attention! I am moderator of the assembly. Don't all speak at once. I shall in turn call upon each of you by name to confess her designs; and at my command, confession—full, free, and explicit—must be made. Attention! Avila Mildmay, tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Avila thought she would like to marry a *very* clever barrister, who would be sure to rise to be Attorney-General, Chief Justice, and Lord Chancellor. Maud Morrison meant to wed in her own country a gentleman of good estate; he might be a baronet; she would allow him to enter Parliament on the Conservative side of the House; but, under any circumstances, he must be a Master of Foxhounds, give capital hunt-breakfasts, and allow her a thousand a year for her own stable expenses. Semolina Sackbut, only daughter of Gregson Sackbut, of the house of Sackbut & Baggage, West India merchants, did not hesitate in her reply. Being of the order of beings who nowadays are called Philistines, Semolina valued prosperity and peace above all things, "light" and "sweetness" included. Besides being very fond of her, her husband must be rich, liberal, and of a temper as easy as his circumstances. She had no wish that he should be a hero, or any body particular. Her only desire was that he "should be rich, and have very little to do for it." Josephine Gough had no intention to marry any one; questioned whether matrimony was conducive to the development of woman's higher nature; rather thought that she should persist in singleness, and do something for the ele-

vation of her sex; if she ever condescended to marriage, her husband would be a manufacturer and politician, who would pledge himself on the nuptial day to put an end to the conflict between labor and capital. Whereat the moderator groaned comically.

"Ugh! Finny, your fate is too terrible for contemplation. Manufacturer, politician, labor, capital! Poor young woman! what will become of you? Millicent Travers, say what you will—it is impossible for you to frighten me now!"

Millie wished no worse lot for herself than that she should marry a clergyman.

"Not a poor curate?" interposed Eugie, smiling as she thought how Millie, with her coquettish looks and turns for sumptuousness in millinery, would figure as the wife of an unbefitted clergyman.

Bridling up at the bare suggestion of a fate so discordant to her tastes and estimate of her own merits, Millie explained on what terms she would range herself among clerical ladies. Her husband should be a High-Church first-class-man of Oxford, and have a prodigious country living, with a grand church and rectory house in the centre of his cure, and three or four outlying hamlets and chapelries. She should give archery-parties and dinner-parties, and have the best gardens and greenhouses in her neighborhood. She should assist her husband by superintending the education of his parochial womankind; and when he was away from home, she would take the control of the parish into her own hands, and drive a team of four curates. Her husband might not accept a provincial deanery, but she would not forbid him to take his place among the bishops.

"Don't look away, Lottie," cried the moderator, "I have not forgotten you. Now, my dear child, leave off blushing, and say out loud what you mean to do for yourself."

"I have never thought of the matter."

"Then dispose of yourself without thinking."

"I shall see what mamma wishes."

"I have no doubt you will. But what do you wish your mamma to wish?"

Blushing from the curve of her delicately rounded chin to the frontal line of her rich, abundant, light-brown hair, and altogether failing in her attempts to hide the confusion which caused her delicious pink lips to pout and writhe with a peculiar curling, crimpling action, as though they were things possessed of a life distinct from that of her beautiful face, she protested that her only wish was that her mamma should please herself. The pleasure and the pain which Eugie's question occasioned Lottie Darling were so evenly balanced, and so vividly expressed in her dimpled cheeks, and laughing eyes, and mobile lips, that it was obvious how easily her tormentor could have teased her into tears, or rallied her into convulsive merriment.

"If they wish me to marry, papa and mam-

ma will settle every thing, and my only desire will be to please them."

"The condition of that dear child," Eugie exclaimed grandly, "reminds one of the feudal ages, and how the darlings of those dark times used to throw themselves into the arms of steel-coated knights at the command of austere parents."

"Let it be," implored Lottie, using the phrase, perhaps a provincialism, with which she was wont to implore her persecutors to desist from persecuting her. Again and again she had been told that she ought to say, "Leave me alone," but she adhered to her old form of entreaty, "Let it be." Every one loved Lottie for the excellent reason that it was impossible not to love her. Every one teased her: partly because her sweet temper never resented maltreatment, but chiefly because she never looked so lovely and bewitchingly kissable as when she was under persecution. No one who had once goaded her into imploring "Let it be," could deny himself the pleasure of goading her to a repetition of the prayer. Such vexation—as highly sensitive and amiable girls experience from the banter of smart talkers—put her features into play, and gave them a piquancy and expressiveness that they lacked in moments of repose. Just as the fire brings out the lines of invisible writing, the gentle malice of teasers brought out some of the finest qualities of her beauty. And Lottie's beauty was of a kind that rewards study. Though it arrested attention at first sight, its excellences could not be appreciated till they were regarded deliberately, and under favorable circumstances. It fascinated the beholder by degrees, as he watched the subtle changes of her expression, and caught joy from the fleeting lights and dimpling smiles of her gentle face. There was no end to the pleasant surprises that it afforded the critical observer.

"Lottie Darling," urged Eugie Bridlemere, authoritatively, "you are withholding information from the court, and trifling with its august president. If you don't speak more fully, it will be my painful duty to commit you for contempt."

"In which case?" Lottie inquired, archly.

"The consequences," Eugie replied, with terrible sternness, "will be awful to contemplate."

"Indeed," Lottie asseverated, slowly and earnestly, as though it were of the greatest moment to her that the statement should satisfy her inquisitors, "I have told the *truth*, the *whole truth*, and *nothing* but the truth."

"You won't get any thing more out of her," Maud Morrison remarked to Eugie. "When the child purses up her little mouth in that way, it is a sign that she is going to be mulish. And though she *is* a darling she can be as obstinate as a mule, and as close as death."

"My belief is that she is keeping something notable from us," cried Semolina, with unusual sagacity.

"It is as clear as daylight," remarked Eugie, rising from the floor to her full height as she spoke, "that she has been engaged for months clandestinely—engaged throughout this whole half-year, without letting us know any thing about it."

"Oh! *do* leave off this nonsense now!" Lottie implored. "Let it be."

"Girls," urged the malicious Eugie, "behold her! Her confusion under my searching eye, under *our* indignant gaze, declares her guilt. To-night we will try the culprit, and if we find her guilty, after a patient and strictly impartial examination of the evidence, we will *repudiate her*."

As all this lawless and absurd talk had been spoken in a much louder tone than the speakers used in tranquil seasons, some of it would have been heard beyond the room, even had the "privileged Constantines" taken the precaution to close the door of their apartment. But it so happened that the door was open throughout the whole comedy. It happened, moreover, that the door of the adjoining room was open, and that Miss Spider, the English superintendent of the school, was then and there busy at needle-work. A vigilant person, whose waist had long since committed suicide by expansion, Miss Spider was a very energetic and serviceable assistant to a mistress who held her in the highest esteem. But the Spider's virtues and services were not of a kind likely to commend her to the good-will of the girls. It was whispered among them that she was capable of the baseness of listening at bedroom doors after the ringing of the nightly "silence bell." It was alleged that she was meanly—not to say wickedly—peevish to the younger children, who were greatly in her power. It was remarked that she was obsequious and mealy-mouthed to Miss Constantine, whose one and unaccountable infatuation was that she had a good opinion of the prying governess.

On the present occasion Miss Spider certainly was not in any way blameworthy for hearing what was not meant for her ears. All that she had caught up of the talk in the "long room" consisted of words which she could not help hearing. Of course those words scandalized the lady. Not only were they "privileged", talking and laughing boisterously in their private room—no trivial offense—but they were talking freely and flippantly on a most serious and delicate topic. They were gossiping lightly on a subject absolutely interdicted to the young ladies of Miss Constantine's establishment. For a moment, in her indignation, Miss Spider was on the point of rushing into the "long room" and upbraiding the offenders. But prudence overcame the rash impulse. Those girls in their last half-year were not under her rule. If she attacked them in English, they might retort in French, with phrases beyond her limited and uncertain knowledge of the Gallic tongue. The Spider knew from experience that she was no match in polite irony for Eugie

Bridlemere. How, then, could she hope to quell that sauciest of tall girls, and half a dozen other confederates in rebellion? In her perplexity and anger Miss Spider went off at full speed to Miss Constantine, and told her how egregiously the seven girls were misbehaving themselves, to their own shame and the discredit of the entire school. To the subordinate's surprise and chagrin, her principal, instead of drawing a long face, burst into laughter. Something in the report, or the reporter, or both, must have tickled the lady amazingly. When she had had her laugh out, she said,

"Naughty girls, they have broken loose on the last day, have they? Well, let them have their fun. It will be innocent girls'-prattle. I can trust them; and I wish I could hear it all without being required to stop it. Keep out of their way, Miss Spider, and when I have finished this note, and written another, I will go up stairs and scold them."

If she was not quite as good as her word, Miss Constantine was true to her purpose; and, having dispatched her letters, she climbed to the top of her large house, and approached the "long room" just in time to hear Lottie Darling's last entreaty that her persecutors would "let it be."

Eugie Bridlemere had scarcely declared the punishment which Lottie should undergo in case she were found guilty, when, to the astonishment and dismay of the seven girls, Angelica Constantine, in all the stateliness of her forty-fifth year, entered the room, and standing midway between the door and the bevy of fluttered damsels, surveyed them with laughing eyes.

CHAPTER II.

THE SAME ASSEMBLY, WITH ANOTHER MODERATOR.

MISS CONSTANTINE's unexpected appearance caused a commotion in the "long room." Eugie Bridlemere "backed" quickly on seeing the school-mistress, who had come within half a foot of her; and having retired to a respectful distance, she made a profound reverence, with a deliberateness and grace which showed the excellence of Madame Bourbonnade's instructions in personal deportment. The girls, who were sitting on the floor, sprang to their feet, and having composedly moved away from one another, so that each should have sufficient space for the execution of her courtesy, sank simultaneously downward, and then slowly resumed the erect posture. Room having been made for them by Eugie and the other four makers of courtesies, Lottie Darling came out from the narrow space between two beds, and, in company with Josephine Gough, who had dropped from her perch on the foot of her bed, performed a gesture of reverence that was not inferior to any of the courtesies that had preceded it. It was clear to Miss Constantine that, if her "privileged girls" had "broken

loose" in her absence, they were incapable of contumacy in her presence. The school-girls of this period are less respectful in demeanor, if not less dutiful in thought, than were the young ladies of five-and-twenty years since, to all persons placed in authority over them.

"And what terrible crime has Lottie perpetrated that you think of repudiating her?" inquired Angelica Constantine. "If her countenance declares her guilt, Eugie, as you say it does, her crime can be nothing worse than the sin of looking somewhat prettier than usual. But you can scarcely think of punishing her so severely for so pleasant and harmless an offense. What has she been doing, girls?"

"O-oh! dear Miss Constantine," Lottie implored, with a comically doleful prolongation of the "oh!" "don't make them tell you."

"It must be something very bad, if you are afraid that I should hear it."

"No, no; it is nothing very heinous or disgraceful," Lottie protested, with the cooing, quavering, wheedling voice which seldom failed to make her entreaties successful; "but indeed it would be cruel of you to make us confess. It is only that we have gone a little mad, and been talking a great deal of nonsense."

"And I am not to be a sharer of the fun! Well, girls, if you mean to send me to Coventry, I have nothing to do but to submit to my fate."

Miss Constantine's humility was irresistible. Since she took their treatment of her so meekly, the girls felt there was no course open to them but a policy of perfect confidence and communicativeness.

"She is obstinate," Eugie Bridlemere blurted out, "and won't tell us what kind of husband she would like to have."

"A husband?" exclaimed Miss Constantine, interrogatively, and with a cleverly assumed air of surprise.

"Just that," Eugie assented. "Every other girl has been frank and outspoken, but Lottie won't divulge; and when we insisted on a statement, she asked us to 'let it be.' It is too bad of her! You see, Miss Constantine, as we shall cease to be school-girls to-morrow, we thought there would be no harm in having a little confidential chat about matrimony, and our views respecting it."

"Indeed! indeed!" cried Miss Constantine, startling and almost terrifying the more timid of the privileged maidens by the sudden change of manner, as she addressed them in the voice of mingled severity and sorrow and reproachfulness which was known in 145 Hanover Square as her "scolding voice," "this is very extraordinary conduct!—conduct that is foolish, frivolous, unseemly! A most improper topic! I will not ask who of you began the folly. I shall regard you all equally at fault, and allot the same punishment to you all. Each of you has a *reprise de trois*."

"Oh! Miss Constantine! oh! dear Miss Constantine!" ejaculated seven voices in harmonious dismay and expostulation. "Not on

our last day at school! That is such a disgrace! Don't give us a *reprise de trois*."

Until they caught the mischievous brightness and twinkling which their vehement and clamorous protest against the enormity of the punishment brought to Angelica's eyes, the seven simpletons imagined her to be in earnest, and each of them had failed to see that, her mark-book having been made up for the half-year then ending, a *reprise de trois* could not seriously affect her scholastic position, and that it would not be greatly injurious to her when she had left the school.

Miss Constantine's laughing eyes, however, reminded them of the state of the case, and at the same time assured them that they had not really fallen under her displeasure. A school-mistress's pleasantries are like a judge's jokes. They are always well received by the courtiers of her own court. The seven privileged maidens had no sooner recovered from the first shock of their delight at discovering the fictitious and altogether histrionic nature of the lady's censure than they applauded rapturously the skill of the actor who had for the moment so thoroughly persuaded them that they had gravely offended her. Moreover, though from one point of view the *reprise de trois* would have been an illusory sentence, it would, from another aspect, have been a serious punishment. As Lottie Darling most justly observed, it would have been a terrible disgrace had they been sent from school, and launched upon adult life, with the shame and burden of three black marks set upon them.

Having playfully remitted the *reprise de trois*, Angelica Constantine amused herself by ascertaining what each of the girls had wished for herself with respect to matrimony; and though every particular of the ridiculous conversation was repeated to her, she evinced no disapprobation of its wildest extravagances. She smiled at Eugie's wish for a cavalry colonel of the highest fashion; smiled again at Josephine Gough's benevolent intentions toward womankind; and laughed outright at Millie's ambition to drive a team of curates.

"And what do you advise us to do in the matter, dear Miss Constantine?" Eugie inquired, when the confessions had been made.

"I am of Lottie's mind," returned the governess, "and advise you to leave the matter, as you call it, to your mammas."

"But some of us, perhaps, will have to decide for ourselves," suggested the practical and self-dependent Finny Gough.

"In which case," returned Angelica, "decide unselfishly—that is to say, with no greater care for your strictly individual happiness than prudence enjoins you to have respecting so important a question. Have a regard for your own happiness, but think of the happiness of other people; consider the reasonable wishes, Eugie, of your family, and have also a little consideration for the well-being of the man who asks you to be his. Though you should

love him, if you have reason to think that your acceptance of him would, in the long run, be hurtful to your suitor, I should say, 'Don't be influenced at all by desire for your own happiness; be unselfish, and out of your love of him place him at a distance from you.'

"Not many women could act so," Maud Morrison interposed.

"Not many," Angelica assented. "The perfect unselfishness of the person who can sacrifice himself freely and completely for the good of another is perhaps the rarest of all virtues."

"Himself!" Josephine Gough exclaimed, catching at the word which implied a sentiment repugnant to the young lady who believed that, if selfishness was the failing of some women, *inordinate* selfishness was the universal characteristic of men. "No living man is capable of such heroism. Men are much more selfish than women."

"I have not found them so," Miss Constantine responded, dryly.

"Oh! Miss Constantine," protested Avila Mildmay and Josephine in the same breath, "you must admit that men are desperately, outrageously selfish."

"Then, my dears," returned the school-mistress, banteringly, "you must set them an example of disinterestedness."

"Even good men," Josephine insisted, stoutly, "are apt to think too much of their own interests."

"And even good women," retorted the governess, with a significant accent, which brought a slight blush to the face of her self-sufficient and self-complacent pupil, "are apt to think too much of their own goodness."

Whereat five of the privileged girls laughed outright, and Lottie Darling betrayed her amusement by a mischievous smile; while Finny, who felt herself properly snubbed, fell back behind Eugie, the tall. Said Eugie, recalling the discussion to the subject from which it had wandered,

"But though self-sacrifice is a sublime virtue, Miss Constantine, you would not commend any girl who, for her family's sake, married a man whom she hated?"

"Certainly I should not commend any girl for vowing falsely on her bridal day that she loved the man whom she detested. Moreover, the girl of your case, while sacrificing herself, would be sacrificing the man to whom she would certainly prove an afflicting wife. To be admirable—indeed, to be itself—self-sacrifice must be scrupulously considerate of, and honest to, the feelings and rights of others. To achieve self-sacrifice, it is not enough that a woman should make herself miserable; she must also be careful to sacrifice no one else. Your girl, whose conduct I should very warmly condemn, would really be actuated by a selfish motive—the desire to please her family at the expense of the victim to whom she would bind herself for life."

"But, upon the whole, would you advise girls to make trials of matrimony?"

Miss Constantine's face assumed a droll look as she answered, decidedly, and also quizzically,

"Decidedly, I should advise girls to *make trial* of matrimony, bearing well in mind that the experiment involves consequences from which the curious inquirer can not easily retreat after having made the trial. Bearing that fact in mind, no sensible or good girl will for any consideration marry any man, if her affection for him is nothing stronger than a general kindness, or if she has any reason to believe herself incapable of loving him, and holding his love, throughout life."

"Girls should be cautious," put in the moon-faced little Philistine, Semolina Sackbut. "The girl is a mere simpleton who accepts her first offer."

"Indeed!" rejoined Miss Constantine, on the point of wounding Semolina by unreasonable merriment, though she replied with perfect gravity! "Is it necessary that the bravest knight should not be the first to appear in the lists? A fisherman may catch a magnificent fish almost as soon as he has thrown his line into the water, and not have another bite the whole day through."

At which apt, though indiscreetly chosen, illustration, Eugie Bridlemere exclaimed, saucily,

"Fie, fie, Miss Constantine; you are comparing husband-catching to fly-fishing, and suggesting that a girl, angling for a settlement in life, should take pains to hook her first fish, and bring him to land, if he is a big one."

If the girls were slightly scandalized at this impudent speech, it delighted Angelica, who forthwith gave her critic a kiss, and acknowledged that she had been properly called to order.

Miss Constantine's complaisance causing Josephine Gough to feel that the time had arrived for her to come forth from her place of retirement behind Eugie's skirt, the champion of womankind and the political economists observed didactically,

"But though marriage, under favorable circumstances, may be the lot that a girl has most reason to desire, and may also be the field in which she may be most useful to her species, as well as most happy, still woman may be happy without a husband, and demonstrate by her action that singleness is not necessarily a despicable condition."

That Finny—who did not stand so high in her companion's esteem as in her own—should have had the audacious stupidity to make this patronizing defense of feminine celibacy to Miss Constantine, appeared so inexpressibly comical to Eugie Bridlemere that she burst into laughter, which carried all its hearers, with the exception of Miss Constantine and poor Josephine, into a most disorderly outburst of merriment. Holding her waist lest it should be snapped like a piece of stick by the violence of her humorous convulsions, and rocking the upper part of

her figure to and fro, Eugie Bridlemere screamed with vociferous delight; and if her laughter was not surpassed in loudness, it was excellently sustained by the peals of the other five laughers. A party of loungers, promenading on the scorched turf of the shady side of Hanover Square, wondered what could account for the sounds of riotous glee that came to them from the highest windows of Miss Constantine's house. And they had good reason for their curiosity and amazement; for once and again, when the laughter had subsided to the usual quietude of the decorous establishment, it rose again as loudly and merrily as before. Though she could not refrain from joining in the mirth, Lottie Darling pitied the luckless Josephine. Not that Josephine was a girl to Lottie's taste. More than once Lottie had remarked in a cooing, pitiful way in strict confidence to a particular friend, "Finny Gough, with her hard notions and knock-down manner, is *such a mistake*; notwithstanding her good points, she is *such a mistake* in the way of a girl." But Lottie's conscience pricked her while joining in the merciless ridicule of the mistake's last mistake. It really was too bad a punishment for the poor girl, though she had made herself extremely ridiculous.

Mr. Disraeli, looking with impenetrable blankness at a laughing House of Commons, and masking his face with a look of utter inability to see the cause of amusement, is not a more interesting study than was Miss Constantine, while by a prodigious effort she maintained an aspect of seriousness, and even glanced approvingly at the blunderer.

"She has amused you in a marvelous degree," remarked Angelica, laying her right hand kindly on Josephine's head, and taking the mortified girl under her protection, when at length the merriment had quite died out, "but it appears to me that Josephine has closed the conversation with a very sensible remark. She is quite right. A woman may be very useful, and also very, *very* happy, in a state of singleness. Years since, girls—ay, years before the time when you were tiny creatures in the nursery, and Eugie was a wee romp who had to be put in the corner at least once every hour—I thought that I should live to be a wife and mother. But I have not married, and yet I am very happy—I thank God for it—*very* happy."

There was something of sadness, something of gentle regret for what had only almost been long ago, in the serenity which pervaded the woman's countenance, as she thus addressed the party of joyful, hopeful, inexperienced girls, who, in all the gladness and innocence of virgin simplicity, had been looking forward to the way of life in which she had not been permitted to walk. Her momentary exhibition of a grief which had long ago lost the sting and poison of sorrow would have prevented a renewal of the merriment, even if Eugie and her confederates in fun had wished for another peal of laughter.

"And having discussed an interesting topic at some length," Angelica observed, in a matter-of-fact voice, "I think you will agree with me that there is no need to re-open the discussion this half-year. Should you think otherwise, before you renew the debate, you had better shut the windows and doors, so that you may not be overheard."

The girls were vehement in assuring their dear Miss Constantine that not another syllable should be uttered by them to re-open the discussion under her roof.

"Then let us think of another interesting topic, tea and bread-and-butter. You members of a sentimental parliament must have talked yourselves hungry by this time. So, Eugie, run to Mrs. Standish, and tell her that our tea is to be a 'grand tea,' with all the potted meat, and marmalade, and fruit that she can give us. There, children, be off with you."

The children departed ceremoniously, each of them pausing at the door to make the usual courtesy of withdrawal. A quarter of a century since much time was spent at 145 Hanover Square in making courtesies; and Miss Constantine maintains that none of the time so expended was misspent. Girls should be encouraged to take bodily exercise indoors as well as in the open air; and the muscular effort requisite for the performance of the stateliest and gracefulest gesture of reverence is the best of all exercises for a growing damsel. Again, to be proficient in the art of courtesying is to possess an accomplishment which every lady requires, and no woman can excel in without sound instruction and daily practice. Moreover, in a girls' school to require the girls to courtesy, one after another, on entering or leaving a room, is to prevent them from crowding together embarrassingly at door-ways, and from huddling together and tumbling over one another in passages.

Engie Bridlemere was the first to courtesy and depart. Lottie Darling was the last of the seven to sink gracefully to the floor, and rise with interesting slowness under the gaze of her preceptress.

But this young person, instead of gliding out of the long room, and down the longer corridor, after the reverential performance, glanced shyly at Miss Constantine from beneath the long dark-brown (almost black) lashes of her burning blue eyes; and, on receiving the glance of encouragement for which the blue eyes mutely petitioned, she approached Angelica Constantine with steps expressive of timorousness as well as of delight.

She was a girl of perfect shape and winning—though somehow unusual—carriage. She was not deficient in dignity of figure and bearing; but no one ever thought of applauding her for her stateliness. She was never described by the endowments which she unconsciously withdrew as much as possible from observation. She was no girl to make the most of herself, and enter a ball-room with the

"air" and "presence" of a belle, conscious of her dazzling properties, and ready to receive admiration as her due. No one failed to observe that she had an elegant and harmoniously developed figure, a delicate and very lovely profile, lips of bewitching expressiveness, delicious eyes, a perfect forehead, half a hundred ravishingly charming smiles, and an abundance of warm-brown tresses, whose color, belonging to the lightest hues of brown, was rendered all the more notable by its contrast with the darker color of the hair of her finely penciled brows, and with the exceeding darkness of her long eyelashes. Yet, with all these striking charms, Lottie was not what is ordinarily called a "striking girl." With not a tithe of Lottie's beauty, Eugie Bridlemere was much more striking. "The child would be perfect," Madame Bourbonnade had repeatedly observed to Miss Constantine, "if she could only be taught how, and *made*, to show herself off." But Lottie never could be taught how to display and emphasize herself; and could she have been taught the art of "showing herself off," she could not have been *made* to act on the knowledge.

Madame Bourbonnade showed her good sense in forbearing to improve Lottie's figure and style of walking; and even in coming to like them, distinct though they were from the more impressive carriage which the Professor of Deportment succeeds in imparting to a majority of her aristocratic pupils. "Lottie Darling puzzles me," madame observed at the outset of her acquaintance with the girl. "I can't make out what it is, that ought to be done to her. She is as straight as a line in the back, delicately curved, elastic, and yet there is something wrong about her. She is not round-shouldered, she does not stoop, and she does not poke her chin out, like some demoiselles, as though nature meant it for a pump spout; but she can't hold herself so as to look down on the world. And what is it in her walk that makes it the walk of a gentle, petted, irresistible creature—a rare puss, a wise cat, a delicious animal—rather than the walk of a high-bred young lady? She creeps up to you like a dainty creature and gentle animal, and just as you are on the point of stroking her fur, she turns her blue eyes up to you, and becomes a young lady. She is beyond me. I must leave her alone, though I do know she ought to be somehow different. And, *ma foi*, if it is not the true grand style, I am not too sure that it may not be something finer. I will leave that demoiselle alone, and take my money for teaching her nothing. The papa of such a pet ought to pay me double fees for not trying to spoil her."

When Madame Bourbonnade's delicious animal had made a circuit up to Angelica Constantine, it turned its face entreatingly upward to the mistress, and, purring in its peculiar fashion, remarked, "It is so good of you to let us off so easily."

"And you would not tell them as much as they wanted to know?" inquired Angelica.

Laughing pitifully, out of pure compassion for the distress into which she had been driven, Lottie answered pathetically,

"Dear Miss Constantine, I told them every thing I had to tell, but they *wouldn't* 'let it be.' And what more could I say on the spur of the moment—I who all my life through have never had a single thought about marrying?"

"Take my advice, Lottie, and don't think about it yet awhile."

"Oh, dearest" (the wheedling puss was the only girl at 145 Hanover Square who could have addressed Angelica as "dearest" without adding "Miss Constantine"), "I don't mean to think about it. Nothing would be more terrifying or cruel to me than to be told that I must marry at once. I am going home now; and I want to live with mamma always, and love her. Indeed, indeed, I could not bear to be separated from her again so long as a whole half-year. She is such a very love."

And then, what with filial excitement at a vivid recognition of her mother's loveliness, and what with delight at the thought of her speedy return to the home where she would be privileged to love and caress her mother incessantly, and what with compassionate tenderness for the woman near her, who had no child of her own to cosset, the girl was so overcome by her emotions that she threw her arms round Miss Constantine's neck, and, kissing her vehemently, ejaculated,

"Oh, I do so love her—I do so love her; but indeed I have room in my heart for you too!"

"To be sure you have, Lottie," responded Angelica, returning the girl's kisses, "and for several besides me and your mamma. You have the faculty of loving, and one day you will see that you are more fortunate in having that power than in having all the other blessings God has given you."

"I know it," Lottie replied, raising her wet blue eyes up toward Angelica's thoughtful face. "There is more happiness in loving than in being loved."

"On that question, my pet," returned Miss Constantine, stroking the creature's silken brown hair, "you can speak from experience of both delights, for, while you love every one, every one loves you."

"Do you think it will always be so?" Lottie inquired, curiously, and with a beseeching tone which seemed to imply that, by answering her in the affirmative, Miss Constantine could strengthen her hold on the world's affection.

"I hope it will never be otherwise."

"Then you are not sure?"

"Yes, Lottie, it will always be so, if your faculty of loving does not diminish, and if—if—"

"If what?"

"If you don't require too much of others, and never resent the discovery should you find that the objects of your affection care something less

than you care for them. To flourish in perfect contentment, love must be lavish in giving, and slow to think itself slighted. It must be a liberal paymaster, and very moderate in its exactions."

"My danger is that I may be jealous?"

"It is the danger of all loving natures; but you'll avoid it, and other griefs also, if you hold firmly to your doctrine that there is more joy in loving than in being loved. But enough of this, beauty, for the present. The 'grand tea' will be ready in a few minutes, and you may not come to it with red eyes."

"To be sure," laughed Lottie. "I have been crying with happiness, and made myself a fright. How naughty I am to wear an ugly face because you are more than usually good to me."

At which speech Miss Constantine smiled.

"Yes, Lottie, yours is an ugly face. But in spite of its ugliness, I should like to have it always near me; and after the holidays I shall miss it."

"Thank you, Miss Constantine," exclaimed Lottie, blushing from her pink lips to the tops of her tiny ears; "but I was not spelling for a compliment."

"Had you spelled for it, puss, you would have had a sharp speech instead of a sweet one," Angelica answered, as she hastened from the room.

Three minutes later, when Lottie Darling took her place with a joyous face at the longest tea-table in Brighton, no redness was observable in the soft skin of her eyelids.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT YARD.

As the time drew near for the arrival in London of the 10-10 A.M. train from Brighton, on the day following the incidents narrated in the last chapter, there was an unusual commotion on and near the platform of the "Brighton side" of the London Bridge station. Carriage after carriage rolled up to the platform, and deposited on the platform a happily agitated mamma, or proud father, or an elder sister, who had driven to "the City" from "the West End" to meet one or more of Miss Constantine's girls. There was Lord Boxhill's grand coach, with its gorgeous hammer-cloth, and florid panels, and white-wigged coachman, and superbly stepping bay horses, whose black legs sprang from the smooth surface of the carriage-way in bounding curves, as though they were pieces of India-rubber machinery. There were elegant barouches, containing ladies in summy silks and gossamer bonnets, and sly broughams, from which stepped elderly gentlemen, who had come to the terminus between breakfast and business, just to have a peep at the girls, before going off to prosaic duties in legal chambers, or dingy offices, within a stone's-throw of Lombard Street. Keen-eyed, hard-featured Zedekiah

Bromwich, who was not credited with an excess of the finer sensibilities by his business acquaintances, had found heart and time to visit the station, so that he might kiss an apple-checked little girl, of whom he was fondly proud, and to whom he was giving the best education, as he expressed it, that "money could buy." And Ned Constantine, of Oriel College, Oxford (Dean Constantine of this present date), true to an appointment with his sister, came to the ground in a job-master's fly.

The number of the private carriages drawn up in line, and the number of the gentlemen and ladies promenading on the boards, curiously glancing at one another, as strangers brought together in public by a common interest are wont to study one another furtively, were too notable to escape the attention of loungers who had no relations at Brighton girls' schools. The stir was so remarkable that even Cyril Wyldhurst—who had missed the express train for Folkestone and the Continent by exactly thirty-seven seconds—condescended to ask a superior station porter what had caused the gathering. Sleekest-whiskered and most lackadaisical of men-about-town, Cyril seldom deigned to notice any thing; and he felt a secret shame at the weakness which caused him to inquire, "What's up?" On learning that the next train from Brighton was an unusually "heavy one," and comprised two saloon-carriages of young ladies, going home from school for "their 'ollidies," the unemotional gentleman could scarcely find power to say, superciliously, "That all?" But as his misadventure in being too late for the Folkestone Express required him to while away a tedious hour or two at the terminus, Cyril decided that he would not return to the Folkestone platform until he had seen "what the girls were like." Miss Constantine would have been gratified had she known that, on seeing her girls a few minutes later, Mr. Wyldhurst faintly admitted to himself that they were "a rather showy lot."

The "showy lot" did not disperse without much kissing. It was incumbent on them to kiss repeatedly their respective papas and mammas and elder sisters, amidst the distractions of fear and triumph with which they looked here and there for missing luggage, and eventually found it under their very noses. The number of "last kisses" which the young people exchanged with one another, and with their "dearest, dearest Miss Constantine," was prodigious. But the music and hubbub of the meeting and going away ended too soon for the satisfaction of Mr. Cyril Wyldhurst, who found the station strangely desolate and depressingly ugly, when Angelica Constantine, after restoring some of her charges to their natural guardians, and sending off others, under the escort of governesses, to catch trains at other stations, went away in a fly with her clerical brother of the half-blood and whole heart.

With Miss Spider for their chaperon, Lottie Darling and two of her school-fellows, Clara

Mitcham and Eva Douglas, drove in one of the railway company's cabs to the Euston Square Station, where Miss Spider bade the young people "adieu," after seeing them packed safely into a first-class carriage, and giving half a crown to the guard, in consideration of his promise to see that no harm preventable by the most vigilant discharge of his duties should befall the young ladies. At Slingsby Junction, the half-way station between London and Hammerhampton, it had been arranged that Clara and Eva should be met by their jocose Uncle Peter, who would carry them off for a hundred miles or more in a north-eastern direction, while Lottie Darling, under the eye of another vigilant guard, to whom Sir James Darling, Q.C., the Hammerhampton County Court Judge, had spoken on the subject of the young lady's journey, would run down in little more than an hour to Owleybury, whence she would drive to Arleigh Manor, Sir James's house, in that most picturesque slip of Boringdonshire that runs into Flocktonshire and Miningshire.

During her passage from Slingsby Junction to Hammerhampton, Lottie Darling had a first-class carriage all to herself. But the solitariness neither alarmed nor irked her. She knew nothing of the inconveniences to which an unattended girl may be subjected by the intrusiveness of a single traveling snob or vagrant ruffian. On finding herself alone, therefore, she had no fear lest that bugbear of timid damsels traveling "without an escort," "an impudent, staring man," should appear at the next resting-station, and seat himself by her side. And when alone, Lottie seldom wearied of her own company. Indeed, though all England contained no less self-sufficient maiden, she was, in the most agreeable sense of the term, on excellent terms with herself. Her mind could always yield itself congenial diversion. It's only your empty-headed woman who can not get through the hours of a railway journey without chattering to her casual fellow-travelers, if she has any at hand to pester with the smallest talk, or without the feeble aid of a silly novel, if she is doomed to a brief period of solitary confinement. And Lottie's head, though it may not have been the largest ever put on a girl's shoulders, certainly was not empty.

Not that she was an unusually clever girl, or quick at learning. Though Miss Constantine had never educated a more consistently industrious pupil, Lottie had never in her whole scholastic career gained a first prize in any single department of book study. She had carried off second prizes in French, and German, and History, and Arithmetic; but, in every branch of study in which she had competed for honors, she had been fairly beaten and considerably surpassed by "the winner of the first cup." Her stock of knowledge was not contemptible. Besides knowing all the things which even a fool would not like his wife to be ignorant of, she had much soundly acquired information respecting matters which the Mental Stimulus

Association declares, rightly or wrongly, to be outside the range of an average school-girl's acquirements. But she was no prodigy of learning or intellectual smartness. She was, however, rich in mental endowments and qualities which no amount of scholastic cramming can force into, and no art of examiners can bring out of, inferior girls. Her perceptions were delicately fine, her tact was perfect; and what she lacked in sheer force of brain was made up to her in sensitiveness and discretion. Without knowing it, she was a nice discerner of character, and a mistress of the art of pleasing. It was rare for her to cause unintended pain by touching a companion's weak or sore points; but when she had the mischance to say the thing that should have been left unsaid, or by an inadvertent look to occasion a momentary distress, she saw her error instantly, and knew instinctively whether it would be best for her to retreat at once from the difficulty, or cover her mistake with soothing and palliating words. She enjoyed to sit on the outskirts of conversation, and in silence to watch the faces, while she studied the thoughts of the speakers. In like manner, in moments of solitariness, she liked to watch her own mind, and study her own thoughts.

And pleasant thoughts rose from her mind like violets from a sunny bank in spring-tide. She was no longer a school-girl, but a young lady on the point of coming out, if not quite "come out" at present. She wondered how she should like the conditions of the new life before her. At home, on evenings of entertainment, she would no longer enter the vacant drawing-room by herself, and wait for the appearance of the ladies, on their retreat from the dining-room, but would have a place at the banquet of state, and be *one* of the ladies. She would be taken in to dinner by gentlemen, with whom she would be expected to converse with all the self-possession of which she should be capable. It would devolve upon her to sing and play at the piano-forte, and exert herself to make her mamma's parties "go off" brilliantly. She would always accompany her father and mother to evening parties, sometimes go with them to grand dinners. She speculated as to what kind of persons she should encounter at her visits of ceremony. She should be stupendously rich, and the management of her vast income would require her conscientious attention; for had not her mamma told her that, on leaving school, she would have for her personal expenditure fifty pounds a year? She wanted information on half a hundred points respecting the neighborhood in which her father had settled on being appointed the County Court Judge of Hammerhampton, and about Arleigh Manor, the place which he had taken only nine months since, and she had seen only in the winter season, when the garden was at its worst, and the trees of the park-like grounds had been leafless, and the river Luce, which whirled and eddied round the promontory of

the lower lawn, had looked so cold that she had shivered at the sound of its rattling and swollen waters. Seen under these disadvantageous circumstances, the place had greatly delighted the girl, whose home had heretofore been a house of Upper Bedford Place, Russell Square, in the fog and smuts of Mesopotamia. But of course Arleigh was far brighter and more lovely, now that the garden had been restored, and the large conservatory filled with choice plants, and the birds were singing blithely in the murmurous trees, and the trout were leaping and plashing in the Luce. How, too, about the new carriage? should she like it? and the bedroom (looking toward Minehead, and the blue range of the Flocktonshire Hills), which had been fitted up expressly for her? As to its prettiness and tastefulness there could be no question, for Lottie's mamma had herself chosen the paper, hangings, and furniture, and directed every effort for its decoration. And what could that new "feature of the stable arrangements" be to which her mamma had alluded so mysteriously in her last letter as "a change that would occasion surprise" to Lottie? A very unsophisticated girl, with all these and a score other equally important matters to think about, might well find the time pass quickly as the train, now pausing in its course at petty stations, now grinding away, through darksome tunnels, and now darting out from the blackness, and speeding over rich plains of sunny grass-land, bore her onward from Slingsby Junction to the largest and blackest of our several "black countries."

To some readers it may seem an impertinence to tell them that the traveler by railway from Slingsby Junction, *via* Hammerhampton, to Owleybury, passes straight through the body and heart of the "Great Yard."

Some twelve miles in length, by four miles in breadth, the Great Yard covers a considerable portion of the central division of Boringdonshire. It comprises towns larger than some Continental capitals, and villages where poor men may grow to be millionaires in a quarter of a century. Hammerhampton and Lackeredge are, of course, the principal seats of the Yard's industry; but Grimeswick, Blastrock, Puddlebank, Ironstone, Smithwick, Pitsfield, and Shaftesborough lie within the boundaries of the smoky region. The smallest of these towns shelters a population twice as numerous as one of those west-country villages to which Mr. John Bright—speaking, of course, from the electoral point of view—used to allude derisively in the House of Commons. And they are all connected with one another by a complicated system of interlacing railways, by which the capitalists, and projectors, and middlemen of the district are incessantly running to and fro between the marts where they win or lose their thousands per day with all the fierce excitement and outward coolness which gamblers of another kind used to feel and exhibit at the green tables of Homburg and Baden-Baden.

By daylight this staggering and appalling country is resonant with the mighty blows of steam-hammers, the ringing taps of hand-hammers, the roar of gasping furnaces, the clattering of metallic plates, and the cries of innumerable workers. By night the fierce light which issues from the rumbling, panting mouths of the undying furnaces, and the tall necks of countless shafts, gives a tinge of redness to midnight's deepest blackness, and so illumines the dimly visible landscape that the stranger, journeying through the wide forest of flame-capped turrets, may readily imagine that the nether fires are working upward from the bowels of the earth, and that he may at any moment drop through the thin crust of soil which covers the immeasurable lake of glowing lava. Thus it is when trade is brisk, and the Great Yard is at full work. But the case is *somewhat* different when the demand for iron slackens; and *very* different when the "hands," that can strike so vigorously and deftly for payment with their thousands of ringing hammers, strike for payment in another way, and, dropping their tools, pass suddenly from action to listlessness, from strenuous labor to sullen, angry idleness. Then, by day as well as by night, the vast workshops of the Great Yard are silent and desolate; and in the hours of darkness the majority of the furnaces emit a fainter light, or die out altogether, so that impenetrable blackness would clothe the land, were it not for the unquenchable fires of a few towers that, set like beacons at wide intervals, exhibit imperfectly the gloom and desolateness of the dismal region.

A century since—ay, fifty years since—the ground covered by the Great Yard was one of the fairest and loveliest tracts of Boringdonshire. But the industrial enterprise of the nineteenth century has made ghastly havoc of its beauties. Man's hand has put unsightly marks upon it. It is as though a chimney-sweep, covered with soot, and brutalized with drink, should stagger up to a delicate Venus, freshly sculptured out of whitest marble, and strike its pure, smiling cheek with his grimy paw. It is as though, having put the imprint of his unclean hand on her beauty, he should repeat the blow again and again, till all the artist's finest skill, and all the work's most subtle graces, should be barbarously put out of sight, though not irrevocably obliterated. It is as though the tipsy ruffian, having thus maltreated the thing of beauty, should leap upon it, throw his arms round its neck, rub his abominable lips over its visage, and clothe it with uncleanness from head to foot by his defiling embraces. But just as the statue, thus assailed and dishonored, would retain signs of what it had been ere the blackening villain touched it, and what it would be again on being relieved of the pollution imposed upon it, so the Great Yard still exhibits indications of its former picturesqueness, and has certain indestructible attractions that even man's industry can

not utterly destroy. Human labor has turned its silvery streamlets into black ditches. Human labor has scarred its surfaces with the very spade which heretofore had only been used to enhance its loveliness. Human labor has scorched it with blackening fire, swept away the foliage of its dells, converted its glades into dusty kennels, and transformed its choicest nooks into corners for rubbish. Human labor has broken its undulating outlines with chimneys of the ugliest structure, disfigured its slopes with "works" that are rivals in outward repulsiveness, and littered its once pastoral plains with straggling streets of graceless dwellings. Yet, further, human labor has covered the whole district with a poisonous atmosphere that kills outright all delicate vegetation, and forbids the forest-tree to enlarge its growth, or assume the various hues which nature designed it to exhibit for man's gladness and spiritual benefit. All this, to say nothing of other cruel things, has the industry of these iron times done for the scenery of the Great Yard. But the natural conformation of the country remains to declare how picturesque the land once was, and how fair it might be again. The boldly harmonious undulations of the soil are nature's own monument of her former beauty. They are also nature's promise that, when Mr. Jevons shall have been justified by the failure of our coal-beds, and our beneficent manufactures shall have perished, the survivors of our national prosperity, and the spectators of our national decay, will find the Great Yard a far more agreeable scene for a summer's holiday than it is at present. It is something for worshippers of the beautiful to know that when Hammerhampton shall lose her capitalists, and her hammerers shall have gone to America, the Great Yard will be as picturesque as ever it was. Lackeredge may swarm with beggars, like Bruges, or another city of departed opulence, but its householders will again be able to boast of their "delightful neighborhood!"

Dust and dirt are not less conspicuous conditions of life in the Great Yard than noise and fire. One expects to encounter dirt in shops where nothing but unclean work is done; and the student of human ways must make up his mind to endure dust when he enters iron foundries and descends coal-mines. But the tourist of the Hammerhampton country is likely to think that its rate-payers should water their straggling thoroughfares in dry, windy March and scorching June. The rate-payers think otherwise. Familiarity with black dust renders them insensible to its unpleasantness. They live in the dust, breathe it with every breath, eat it at every meal, see it on every object, and positively enjoy it. The water-cart is a thing unknown in their streets. When the young iron-master, pushing and forcing onward to wealth made out of "works" and "pits," spins about the Great Yard, from foundry to pit-head, in a light trap at the heels of a thoroughbred trotter, his wheels raise clouds of

black dust, to the vivid pleasure of children, who "hooray" after the disappearing cart. In dry weather these same children delight to turn head over heels on huge dust-heaps. In wet weather they show themselves clever at making dirt-pies. Fresh light paint is seldom seen in the grimy regions; for the man would be ridiculed as a madman who should coat his doors and window-frames with delicate colors that would be covered with dust ere they had time to dry. For the same reason one never sees, even in the brightest seasons of the year, a woman of the Great Yard wearing a garment of any perishable hue. Ladies of any kind are seldom visible in the public ways of the grimy region, though some of the managers of "works" are, in every sense of the word, gentlemen, and have gentle wives, who endure the dust smilingly, while they look forward to a "good time coming," when they will be rich enough to remove from their official residences in The Yard to bright villas in The Yard's outskirts. But these gentlewomen lead stay-at-home lives; and when, for urgent reasons, they brave the omnipresent dust of the thoroughfares, they exhibit themselves in no colors but black and brown and the darkest greens. The children have no pretty white frocks, or white satin hats, trimmed with white plumes. As for the vulgar little children, who play "leap-frog" and "tumble-over" in the public dust bins and rubbish corners, their outward garments are indescribable, and their under-clothing distressingly "coaly."

These coaly youngsters abound in every corner of The Yard where no work is being done. Dogs also are abundant in the district. And the common folk of the land are accustomed to speak in a very high pitch of voice—a habit acquired from the exigencies of their hammering work, which requires them to be constantly overbawling a deafening uproar of harsh sounds. These loud speakers are sometimes rough *diamonds*—they are always *rough*. Your true hammerer of the Great Yard knows nothing of "light" or "sweetness," but he has his good qualities. He is heroically improvident; he is roughly dutiful to his wife, and considerate for his bull-dog, preferring the dog to his wife, and both to himself. In bad times, when labor is having one of its disastrous conflicts with capital, he starves himself first, and then he starves his wife; but times must be much worse than "bad" before he will offend his finer nature by putting his dog on half-rations.

On her way from the outskirts to the heart of this marvelous district, Lottie Darling made good use of her eyes, and while the train staid at a siding, some three hundred yards before the entrance of the Hammerhampton station, for an inspection of passengers' tickets, she saw, for the first time in her life, a huge mass of whitely glowing iron, taken from the furnace by puddlers, lifted to an anvil, beaten into a rectangular block by the steam-hammer, and then passed through the presses, until it came out of the last press in long serpentine red rib-

bons of tubbing-iron. She saw the whole process from the window of her carriage. It was wonderful—beautiful, as an illustration of human ingenuity, acting on one of the heaviest and hardest of substances! She saw the puddlers, stripped to the waist, and streaming with sweat, pull the glowing ball with iron pincers to the anvil, heard the dull, bumping, unreverberating thuds of the steam-hammer, and in three minutes beheld that same fiercely reluctant pile of metal transformed into leaping, winding, scorching serpents, which a file of boys caught up with their tongs, and passed on rapidly to a corner of the vast darksome, hammer-ringing workshop, where they could lie out of the way, and cool gradually.

As she watched the process, it occurred to Lottie that it resembled the process by which the forces of the human mind are purified, disciplined, and fashioned by education into ideas, arguments, sentiments. The rude ore resembled thought in its lowest state. The pig-iron was thought relieved of its grossest dross. The furnace, the hammer, the presses, were the educational contrivances which purified thought yet further, gave it compactness and logical texture, imparted form and fineness to it, and eventually offered it to the world in satire, sentiment, cogent illustration, subtle persuasions, binding principles. Had she known that the labor of the agile urchins, who caught up the twisting, writhing snakes of red-hot iron, was attended with considerable danger to them, and that one of those angry serpents, clumsily handled by a juvenile operator, might leap upon the next boy, and pass clean through his body, Lottie would have covered her blue eyes with her hands, and uttered an exclamation of alarm. She would have thought little about the resemblances, and much of the actual hazards of the process. As it was, she was so absorbed in the delight of gazing and thinking, that the ticket-collector, who had arrived to inspect her ticket, was compelled to call to her in a very loud voice, and for a third time, before he could attract her attention. Having shown her ticket, Lottie looked in another direction, and saw a blasting furnace at full work.

"It is very terrifying, and yet very fascinating!" she said to herself, as the train glided slowly into the Hammerhampton station, and the noise of the ringing hammers grew fainter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HAPPY LAND.

THE train rested for a few minutes at Hammerhampton, and, in accordance with a habit already mentioned, Lottie Darling scanned the faces of people assembled on the platform. The gathering consisted chiefly of business men, who gossiped with one another about iron and coal and the prices of labor. They had the air of merchants on 'Change, rather than of travel-

ers waiting for the signal that they should take their seats for a railway journey. Some of them paused in their talk with acquaintances, and taking out pocket-books made brief entries on leaves of Memoranda.

There was one person who arrested Lottie's attention for a longer time than any other individual of the little crowd. He was a tall, stout, well-built gentleman, with a notably large aquiline nose, bushy black eyebrows, and white hair. His dress indicated that he was prosperous, and the general effect of his portly figure and comely face was to declare him on the verge of seventy years of age. He was saluted by several of the business-like men; and it seemed to Lottie's observant eyes that two or three of those, to whom he nodded or spoke briefly as he paced thrice up and down before the carriages, exhibited great pleasure at his slight attentions. Clearly he was a man of mark, and knew it. He was dressed in the style of a country gentleman, with morning coat of blue cloth, gray trousers, white waistcoat, frilled shirt front, and a checked (lavender and white) linen neck-tie folded twice over the band of his stiffly starched, old-fashioned shirt collar. It being a very warm morning, this stout and stately gentleman was hot; and to cool himself he fanned his face with a white silk handkerchief.

Theodore Hook once surprised a gentleman of this imposing style by stopping him in Fleet Street, and saying, politely,

"Excuse me, sir; could you oblige me by telling me if you are any body particular?"

Had Lottie been a saucy young man, instead of a decorous young lady, she would have put the same question to this gentleman of the aquiline profile, and beetling brows, and white hair, whose dignified bearing was characterized by a certain pomposness which disposed her to smile at him, though on the whole she approved him. Before many minutes had passed her curiosity was gratified, and she learned that he was Mr. Guerdon of Earl's Court, Boringdonshire, and the principal banker of Hammerhampton.

At the ringing of a loud bell, the men hastened to their seats; and just before the train started, a man, nearing the middle term of life, sprang quickly into the carriage which Lottie had had all to herself during the run from Slingsby. The intruder had scarcely seated himself, and Lottie had barely inferred, from his rather flash costume and something in his hard countenance, that he was not of her social degree, when he said quickly to a friend on the platform, with offensive jocoseness,

"Here, Jemmy, here's plenty of room here. I am alone with a young lady, and want some one to take care of me," a speech that caused Lottie to flush indignantly, and then assume a look of total unconsciousness to the rude man's existence.

In justice to the object of Lottie's displeasure, he had not supposed she would hear his

speech. In hammer-and-anvil ringing workshops, a man must bawl loudly to make himself heard by persons in the direction of his voice; and though he may be audible to those in front of him, not a word of his utterances is intelligible to persons in his rear. The rude man's vocal style had been formed at the forge, and exhibited the distinctive peculiarities of his metallic school.

Acting on his friend's suggestion, Jemmy succeeded in springing into the carriage when the train was actually moving; and he had no sooner fallen awkwardly into a seat, opposite his acquaintance, than he remarked, with congenial levity,

"All right, Charley—all serene! No work for the undertaker this time!"

Jemmy and Charley were "risen men," who meant to rise higher—i. e., to be ten times as rich as they were then, before twenty more years had passed over their heads. If they were snobs, their snobbishness was innocent of any desire to pass themselves off as gentlemen by birth. Their vanity took a different direction, and impelled them to brag on all convenient occasions how they had "made themselves out of nothing." Charley, whose father had for forty years been an East Anglian squire's farm bailiff (earning thirty shillings a week, besides cottage rent and perquisites), liked it to be believed that he was a "Suffolk plowman's son." Jemmy, whose sire had kept a decent tripe shop in Liverpool, and who had made his first speculation in the Great Yard with £50 provided by the worthy victualer, always insisted that his success in life originated in a single half-crown, which he had brought with him to Lackeredge from a cellar in Bermondsey. Men of the same age—young men on the border of middle age—Charley and Jemmy had been "chums" for fifteen years—from the time when they worked at the same furnace with bared arms and naked shoulders. They had been allies in their fustian days, and they were "mates" still, employing the same "first-class" tailor of the High Street, Lackeredge, to make their showy and expensive coats of the best broadcloth. In fact, they were close friends, after the fashion of friendship generally prevalent in the Great Yard. Jemmy was ready at any moment to cheat Charley in the way of business. Charley never hesitated to tell Jemmy any lie, permissible by the usages of "the trade" to "get the pull over him" in a bargain. But they "stuck to each other," and helped one and other in various ways. Each threw to the other such pieces of profitable business as he could not execute for himself. Each spoke well of the other behind his back. Had Charley fallen into pecuniary trouble, Jemmy would have done his best to save his chum from insolvency, and Charley was ready to do as much for Jemmy.

Speaking in tones which they imagined to be inaudible to the young lady in the farther corner of the carriage, and which perhaps would

have been inaudible to her had her hearing, like theirs, been deadened by years of hammer-and-anvil discipline, these two friends conversed together to the following effect:

"Pig up?" said Jemmy.

"No doubt," replied Charley.

"Asked for at Lackeredge and Grimeswick."

"In demand at Blastrock and Puddlebank."

"Sheets well up?"

"Better than well."

"How about bars?"

"Steady—and firm."

"Plates lively?"

"They'll be more lively."

"Sure of that—quite sure?" inquired Jemmy, in his hardest way.

"They *must* go on rising," returned Charley, with vehemence.

"Things look well."

"Yes, orders coming in fast from France, Russia, Germany."

"The 'hands' will be after a rise."

"Don't talk about them! It puts my blood up!"

"They are a bad lot."

"We are fulling more and more into their power, and they know it. Worse luck for the country."

"Confound the whole lot, I say!"

"There would be an end, then, to our trade. By-the-bye, do you want a lot of plates at four-ten?"

"Want them? Not at that price!"

"They'll be five in two months' time."

"You had better keep them?"

"My hands are fullish, and I want the money."

"How much have you?"

"Just two hundred ton—lying at Blastrock."

"Can't touch them at four-ten—do them at four."

"Nonsense!"

"Keep them, and sell two months hence."

"They are more in your way than mine. I don't do much in plates."

"Well, then, say four."

"You wouldn't offer four if you didn't know where to plant them at four-fifteen."

"Well, come, I'll split the difference—say four-five."

"Done. When? and where?"

"Grimeswick—next week."

"All right."

Whereupon each of the friends took out his memoranda-book and noted down the particulars of the bargain, in which each flattered himself that he had got the advantage of the other. Having exchanged slips of paper, Jemmy and Charley dismissed affairs of business, and with rising affection for one another gossiped on subjects more intelligible and interesting to their hearer at the other end of the carriage.

"Mr. Guerdon is in the train," Charley observed.

"Got his white silk 'ankercher in his hand?"

"Yes—he was mopping his big nose, as usual."

"They tell me that his gout is better."

"He looks tidy; but he isn't the man he was."

"No; but he's good for a few years more."

"I don't want him dead. He has always been civil to me."

"He is a civil banker—ready to oblige; but still not too complaisant."

"His son has come home for good."

"What kind of bird is he?"

"Old Mr. Guerdon has a high opinion of him."

"Of course—he is old Mr. Guerdon's son. John Guerdon never undervalues any thing that belongs to John Guerdon, Esquire, of Earl's Court. His cast-iron door-scraper is always worth more than his neighbor's copper coal-scuttle."

"A man is none the worse, Jemmy, for being on good terms with himself."

"I have seen the young 'un, and spoken with him. A goodish-looking fellow—smaller-boned and better-looking than his father, with a lot of dark hair about his face."

"Is he a college-man?"

"Not a regular college-man—he has been educated abroad—at Bonn, Heidelberg, and other outlandish places."

"Oh! they don't count as colleges in England. Does he know business?"

"First chop—at least his father says so. He has been in houses at Paris, Vienna, Naples."

"Whew! he *has* had advantages!"

"The old 'un, according to his own account, has put a lot of money on him."

"And now he is going to be taken into partnership?"

"Next year, or the year after."

Charley, after thirty seconds' consideration, asked,

"Does he seem a likely fellow to knock under to Scrivener?"

"He is pleasant and affable enough; and he is young. As a young man," observed Jemmy, "he'll, no doubt, be guided by Scrivener. But I should say he's a fellow to hold his own."

"Stands on his pins, eh, and looks you in the face?"

"Quite so. Not a man to ride the high horse, and yet not likely to mount the small pony."

"Then he and Gimlett Scrivener won't work together. Scrivener is masterful."

"No doubt."

"And he has the old man under his thumb."

"Scrivener is the better man of the two."

"By long chalks; and he knows it; and old John Guerdon knows it. In spite of all his grand airs and patronizing way, J. G. has his master in his own bank parlor."

"No doubt. The bank is Scrivener's."

"Gimlett Scrivener is a smart man."

"And sound."

"Every man is sound until he is found out. My brown mare was sound, till I found out the splinter that was growing when I bought her."

"Well, the bank is sound—I'll trust that."

"A business man *uses* his bank—he never ought to *trust* it."

"Not blindly."

"He should use it, praise it, and suspect it," Charley responded, in his hardest way.

"Quite true," assented Jemmy, admiringly.

After a pause, Charley observed,

"The young 'un ain't married, I suppose?"

"No, he ain't; but when he is settled, he'll no doubt be looking out for a wife with money."

"He can suit himself in Boringdonshire. A man can marry well in these parts—a coal-pit or an iron-works. Or if he likes to run into Wales, he may pick out a slate-quarry."

"I had liefest marry a girl with a good coal-pit—I like coal."

"Well, young Guerdon will find a plenty of young women ready to oblige him. I'll be bound they'll be looking him up before he begins to hunt after them."

Whereupon the friends laughed; and as they chuckled over their "cuteness," it seemed to Lottie that they glanced significantly at her.

The men were odious savages, the girl thought hotly, as she reddened again, and looked away from the wretches. She wished that the guard, or Miss Spider, or some one else would come to her protection.

Charley, who sat opposite the young lady, saw the displeasure of her face, and, winking his eye to Jemmy, said, "Don't speak too loud," a remark which the speaker pointed by nodding his head significantly at Lottie's averted head.

From this caution—which, though it was uttered in one of Charley's lowest tones, reached an ear for which it was not intended—Lottie learned that the men had not meant to annoy her, and had been speaking under the impression that she could not overhear them. The discovery relieved her, and she relented toward the "quite common men," feeling that she had done them a slight injustice in rating them as "odious savages" and "wretches."

On being thus called to order, Jemmy fell back on business, remarking,

"Things are looking up."

"They'll be better next year, and better still the year after."

"I think we are in for a time of it."

"Next year I'll buy, buy, buy! Pig, plates, rusty tubbing-iron, old horse-shoes—any thing! Mark my words, before 'the time' is over, iron will go up to six—ay, six-ten."

"And then will come the smash that will break thousands."

"That won't matter to us. We don't mean to be smashed."

"It will serve the fools right."

"Fools ought to be broken up."

"That's what the Almighty made them for."

As Jemmy uttered this religious sentiment, the train pulled up at Lampstock, on the west-

ern border of the Great Yard; at which station the two friends jumped from the carriage, before it had fairly stopped, and went off at a double quick march to Gander's Green, where they were joint speculators in a "little concern" that promised to be an interesting feature of the Yard.

Lottie was glad to be quit of them, but she could not deny that they had unintentionally given her a good deal of interesting information. Trade was brisk in the Great Yard—a fact that Lottie Darling was very glad to know, for the sake of the workmen, their wives, and poor little children. The stout and stately gentleman in the train was Mr. Guerdon, the Hammerhampton banker. He had a son, young, well-looking, and unmarried, who had been educated on the Continent, and was already regarded as "highly eligible" by mammas with daughters on their hands. Mr. Guerdon's partner, Gimlett Scrivener, was "masterful," and likely to quarrel with young Mr. Guerdon. All these pieces of intelligence Miss Darling had picked up from the talk of the "quite common men."

There was still a run of twelve miles to Owleybury. And now the country became fresh, joyous, and vividly green; churches, with sparkling spires and with pretty parsonages near them; villages nestling in the hollows of richly timbered slopes; white farmhouses, with large barns and other appropriate buildings, that wore a pleasant air of pastoral prosperity; wheat fields and barley fields, with their heavy corn ears swaying to and fro under the gentle southern breeze; sunny meadows, whose verdure was flecked with cloud shadows, and dotted with white sheep and red cattle; willow-shaded streamlets and quaint old windmills were among the objects that gave her successive delights. Glancing downward from the Farnborough ridge, along whose lower height the railway ran, she saw the crystal waters of the rapidly meandering Luce. Yonder rose the Flocktonshire Hills, Minehead and the Sugar-Loaf rising above the rest; and look! look! there was Owleybury Cathedral! Tears of intense ecstatic happiness—the joy of which the aged and aging have nothing but the memory—rose to the girl's blue eyes as she thus neared her destination in the picturesque neighborhood, which she had before seen only in a bleak, leafless, gloomy winter.

"To think that I am to live here always in this happy land!" she exclaimed aloud, in her unwitnessed excitement. "Oh! the happiness is too great—the world too charming!"

Without any preliminary stopping for another inspection of tickets, the train glided smoothly into the Owleybury station, and in another moment the cup of Lottie's felicity was full and brimming. For the instant she had forgotten every thing about smoky Hammerhampton, and old Mr. Guerdon, and the "quite common men," and the lovely landscapes. She only knew that she was once

again in her own mamma's arms, and kissing her own mamma's eyes and cheeks and lips. She did not know that any one was near her but the first supreme object of her love. She had no thought for the proprieties—no notion that her impulsive behavior was being witnessed by a score or more people, who were thinking to themselves, "God bless the girl!—how pretty she is!—and what a charming little 'scene' it makes!" As for Lady Darling, who knew that the "scene" had spectators, she cared not a rush for what the world thought. It was enough for her that she again had her girl of all girls in her arms, and was going to take the pet home for "good" and all, if not forever and a day.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER LOOK AT HER.

ONE of the several witnesses of Lottie Darling's delight was Mr. Albert Guerdon, who had ridden to Owleybury station to meet his father, and spent five minutes before the arrival of the train in chatting with Lady Darling. Albert had already made the acquaintance of Sir James Darling, and won the favorable opinion of Sir James's wife, who at fifty-five years of age retained enough of her early beauty to account for the general opinion that in her girlhood she had not been less graceful and winning than her daughter, now at the opening of her twentieth year.

Even at the distance of several yards, it was apparent that time had put white threads in Lady Darling's brown hair. Her face was not devoid of the lengthening lines and look of gentle sadness which the countenances of delicate gentlewomen often assume when the spirits and perfect vigor of life's heyday have left them forever. Not that she was a despondent or sickly being. Her voice was cheerful and musical. Though she was quickly fatigued, her step was elastic, and her movements, resembling her figure, were girlish. But she was no longer young. Power had departed from her; and the tender seriousness of her face betrayed that she secretly strove to reconcile herself to its departure. Without rating herself as an invalid, Mary Darling knew that she was aging at a time when more fortunate women are at the fullness of their strength and ability to enjoy this life. And prematurely aging women may be pardoned for smiling pensively, if they smile pleasantly and often.

Mr. Guerdon, of Earl's Court, was met at Owleybury by his groom and cob, as well as by his son. Albert's appearance was a surprise to the portly gentleman; but the banker was prepared to see his mounted groom and his large broad-backed, huge-shouldered bay steed—an animal almost too large to be called a cob, and well able to carry its customary burden of sixteen stone. Having glanced approv-

ingly at his favorite nag, and his servant's rakish blood hack, John Guerdon condescended to notice his heir.

"Eh! Alb, you here. So you thought you'd come round this way to bear me company? Very glad to see you," observed the senior, taking the most flattering view of his son's conduct.

"Abraham told me you'd return by the early train," answered the son, "and I flattered myself, sir, that you would allow me to accompany you."

"Your animal is in good condition—devilish good trim," remarked the banker, as he regarded, with a horse-loving eye, the nervous and almost thorough-bred creature (black with a starred forehead) which he had bought at a high figure for his son's use, on the eve of the young man's return from the Continent.

"I am proud of him, sir, and I think he is beginning to be proud of me. We flatter each other."

"Well, I will climb into my easy-chair."

This conversation took place when Lottie Darling, in the seclusion of the ladies' waiting-room, was removing from her face and dress some of the dust that had settled upon them during her passage through the Great Yard. In his wish to have another look at Lottie, Albert would fain have prolonged his talk with his father on the platform; until the ladies had entered the lemon-yellow chariot that was waiting for them at the door of the station. But John Guerdon was bent on ambling homeward without delay, so that he should have a couple of hours in his hay fields before dinner. With much help from his man, and some purely formal assistance from his son, he planted himself in his capacious Somersetshire saddle without another word.

There was nothing for Albert but to mount and make a show of readiness to accompany him.

The father and son rode at foot-pace across the station yard, and were on the point of turning into the public road, when a bright thought struck the younger horseman.

"I will overtake you in two minutes, father," he said, hastily, as he turned his horse's head toward the point from which he had just come, "but I must say a word to the station-master about some cases that should have come down by the last night's goods-train."

In another minute Albert was again at the platform steps, and had seen Lady Darling enter her carriage, followed by her daughter. The steps of the chariot were folded up, and the door was slammed by the youthful, pink-eyed lad, who, to his infinite pride, had recently become Judge Darling's footman. The carriage, drawn by a pair of brown horses, rolled slowly over the inclosure before the station, but before the brown pair struck the queen's highway with their hoofs they were overtaken by the rider of the black horse, under circumstances that caused Miss Darling momentary

alarm. As it was in the act of overtaking the chariot, the black horse drew back on his haunches, reared twice, and then, after lightly springing into the air, curveted and caracoled in a fashion slightly terrifying to the ladies, who looked anxiously toward the rider as he raised his hat to Lady Darling, and, letting go his curb-rein, passed onward at a canter. The whole affair was, of course, due to a fine prick of the spur on the horse's flank, and a delicate application of the curb. Albert had obtained another look at Lottie's profile and blue eyes, and, as he rode up to his father, the young man muttered to himself,

"She's angelic! She is ten times as lovely as her picture!"

While the horse leaped and caracoled past the carriage, Lottie exclaimed,

"Oh! mamma, mamma! the horse! the horse!"

"Ah! ah!" ejaculated the elder lady, who had hardly uttered the exclamation when she smiled, and returned Albert Guerdon's bow.

"There is no danger," she remarked, composedly. "Mr. Albert Guerdon rides superbly, and Emperor is manageable, though nervous."

"He is the son of Mr. Guerdon, of Earl's Court?" the girl inquired, recollecting in an instant all that she had heard about the young man.

"Yes; he has recently returned from the Continent. He is on his way back to Earl's Court with his father, whom he met at the station."

"He bowed to you?"

"Yes; your papa and Mr. Guerdon are friends, and Mr. Albert has dined at Arleigh."

"I don't think I ever saw a more beautiful creature!"

"My dear child!" ejaculated Lady Darling.

"Oh! mamma," cried Lottie, in an expository tone, reddening as she made the needful explanation, "I am speaking of the horse. How could you, dearest, imagine that I was speaking of any thing else?"

Lady Darling apologized for her absurd mistake by twining her arm round the girl's waist, and kissing her bright cheek, a caress which put Lottie so perfectly at her ease that her blue eyes looked up roguishly into her mother's penitent face.

"'Tis a gallant creature," observed Lady Darling, "and has a gallant master."

"Emperor is the right name for the brave animal."

"And if," the mother remarked, "you had been thinking of the rider instead of the horse, your praise would not have been extravagant. He is a very handsome young man, and he is a general favorite. Every one speaks well of Mr. Albert Guerdon. He has seen a great deal of the world, without losing the modesty which is always agreeable in young men. Your papa says that he is clever, and a delightful companion. I hope to see him often at Arleigh."

Having thus made her child aware of Mr. Albert Guerdon's title to her good opinion, Lady Darling dropped the subject for the present, and proceeded to speak of a letter which she had that morning received from Lottie's elder sister, Constance, then residing at Nice, under the roof of her uncle, Walter Darling, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at that agreeable port of Southern Europe. Connie was certainly in better health; the signs of pulmonary mischief were leaving her, and she was delighted with her uncle's circle. That being so, Connie had no wish to return soon to England. Papa was of opinion that she had better stay at Nice for a year, or even two years, until the physicians should declare her strong enough to endure the rigorous and variable climate of her native land.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER AND SON.

WHILE Lottie and her mother gossiped thus happily on their homeward way, John Guerdon, of Earl's Court, and his only offspring, rode along a winding lane to the hay fields, for which the banker was bound. Emperor, being a docile animal, and clever in adapting his paces to the speed of inferior creatures, Albert had no difficulty in riding beside the thick-necked cob. When the big pony ambled, Emperor, with the bridle-rein lying loose over his neck, walked with long steps; and when the banker made his steed walk, Emperor shortened his steps, behaving more like a thoroughly broken circus horse than a hunter of pedigree and ability.

"So you managed to get another look at the young lady," observed Mr. Guerdon, senior, winking his right eye under its black, beetling brow.

Coloring slightly, Albert replied,

"I bowed to Lady Darling as I passed her carriage."

"And you didn't look at the young lady, of course?" retorted the father, winking again.

"I saw Miss Darling, sir. How could I help seeing her?"

His right eye expressing extraordinary intelligence as he gave his heir another thrust, the elderly gentleman asked,

"And how about the cases that ought to have come by the last night's goods-train?"

Whereupon Albert laughed, and, rendering a timely compliment to his father's sagacity, observed,

"Ah! sir, he must be a clever fellow who would blind your eyes."

"Ah! boy," rejoined the veteran, chuckling triumphantly at his cleverness in detecting what had been obvious to his groom, to the station-master, and even to Lady Darling, "you can't bamboozle the old man. He is up to a trick or two even yet, though his legs are a bit groggy. Eh! eh! Master Alb, I have caught you out,

have I? Well, time was, boy, when I was a devil for the girls; and when, between ourselves, Alb, the girl I led out to the dance thought herself lucky. John Guerdon, in his young days, had a leg for a silk stocking and a buckled pump that could not be matched in Boringdonshire."

"I have heard, sir," returned Albert, humoring his sire's personal vanity, "that you were considered the handsomest man in the county; and I should not know where to look for a man of your years who could be compared with you."

At that moment John Guerdon secretly congratulated himself on his cleverness in selecting for his heir the continental education, in preference to the training of Eton and Oxford. The boy was a credit to his remarkable father. He looked every inch a gentleman, and was excellent company.

In his gratification, John Guerdon remarked, benignantly,

"Well, Alb, breed is every thing—qualities descend. You are a monsoous good-looking fellow, though you are an inch or two shorter than I; and though I can't say much for the hair which you grow over your face. I wish you'd buy a razor, and shave clean, and have a well-trimmed, gentleman-like mutton-chop whisker. An Englishman ought to look like an Englishman. Still you are a monsoous good-looking fellow."

The elderly gentlemen, who five-and-twenty years since used to say "monsoous" instead of "monstrous," and who were from time to time "oblegged" to run up to "Lunnon," are fast dying out. Ten years more, and the species will be as extinct as the Dodo. There is one of the kind still living in the heart of Dorsetshire, at an extremely old age (though Mr. Thoms declares it to be greatly overstated); but his doctors say that he can't hold out through another winter.

"Thank you, sir," responded Albert, saucily, "but I can't repay your goodness by shaving off my beard and mustaches. They'll soon be the universal fashion."

"Bother your modern fashions!" retorted the senior, hotly. "In my young days fashion and good taste were the same thing."

"I wish they were so now," answered Albert, who held the obsolete notion that young fellows should not argue needlessly with their elders, or oppose them on trivial points.

"And a monsoous good-looking fellow," continued the father, "who will one of these days be master of Earl's Court and first banker of Hammerhampton, ought to marry well. And now, my boy, while the sun is shining is the time for you to make your hay. You should be thinking about marrying."

"I am, father."

"And of course you would not be such a fool as to marry without money."

Albert was silent.

"You wouldn't," urged John Guerdon, turn-

ing as much as he could in his saddle, in order that he might get a good view of his boy's face—"you wouldn't be such a fool?"

"I trust I am not a fool, sir!" answered the diplomatic Albert.

John Guerdon was satisfied.

"Oh! I knew you would not be dreaming of marrying a pauper's daughter. Penniless young women make the best wives for poor men; they are economical, and haven't extravagant desires. The Almighty meant them to marry poor men. 'Like match like' is the rule all the world over. Solomon said so—didn't he?"

"He may have said something like it, sir."

"If he didn't, he ought to have done—it was an omission. And by that rule it is clear rich men have a right to rich women. When a rich man marries a girl without a fortune, he goes against the designs of Providence. You follow me?"

"Closely, sir."

"And you understand me?"

"Quite, father. You wish me to marry a rich woman. That is your meaning."

"Exactly. It is not difficult to explain a matter to you."

John Guerdon was delighted with his son's intelligence and good principles.

"Then," continued the father, "it would be better for you not to get too intimate at Arleigh just at present."

"Is Sir James Darling poor? He does not live as if he were poor."

"He can't be exactly poor, but he is a new man in Boringdonshire, and I can't make out much about him—at least, not so much as you ought to know before you fall in love with his daughter."

"Arleigh is an expensive place. Sir James could not live there as he does on his judicial salary, which is only £1500 per annum, with some extra allowances. He must have private property."

"Oh! he has some. He banks with me, and his account is easy and handsome. He has the dividends on some property that is in the hands of trustees—I suppose his wife's trustees; and he has money of his own in safe investments. I dare say that, one way or other, he may have £3000 a year. But I can't make out whether he has land anywhere. I have pumped him once or twice, but he can keep his own counsel; and he is an important man, with whom I shouldn't like to take a liberty. You follow me."

The portly veteran seemed to think that his statement was full of perplexities, calculated to puzzle his hearer.

"Put him down as a £3000 a year man," continued the banker, who would have unhesitatingly computed the judge's income at that sum, had it been impossible for Sir James to have an account with a London banker, as well as one with Guerdon & Scrivener. "His salary stops when he dies; and then there's only a property yielding £1500 for division among a widow and four children."

"There are four children?"

"Yes; two sons, officers in cavalry regiments, Miss Darling, the eldest daughter, who is delicate and staying for her health at Nice with her uncle, the consul, and the young lady who is just home from a Brighton boarding-school. You see, there's enough for a small, though a genteel, income to do; and no great property to divide by five. Five into forty don't go more than eight. Well, a girl who has not ten thousand is no match for a rich man, though she may be good enough for a parson or a barrister, or a fighting soldier, struggling onward as he best can."

"Money is not every thing, sir," Albert suggested. "Miss Darling is wonderfully beautiful."

"She is a monsoon pretty filly!" assented John Guerdon, who did not hesitate to extol Lottie's charms, as he imagined that his sordid sentiments about marriage were acceptable to his son. "She has a neat head, fine action, and good shape; she is in good condition, and well groomed. Gad! she whimpered charmingly on the platform. I wouldn't have missed the sight for any thing. It was as good as seeing a hare run into by a greyhound. Hang me! Alb, though I am an old 'un, and groggy in the ankles, I felt as if I had come in at the death of a fox. But that is no reason why you should fall in love with her, if she has not a fortune."

Obviously it was no reason. Albert was complaisant enough to admit so much.

"The Darlings are most desirable neighbors," continued the senior; "and Sir James, though quite a new-comer, has already a first-class position. He and Lady Darling visit at the palace and deanery, and Sir James has been invited to Castle Coosie. The old Earl of Slumberbridge and the countess have called at Arleigh. Sir James lives quietly, but he lives in good style, and he has got in with all the best people. But one can know one's neighbors without wishing to marry the whole of them."

Again John Guerdon concluded a speech, displeasing in several particulars to Albert, with a statement to which the young man could cordially assent.

"But there's a wife ready made to your hand, my boy, that I should monsoously like for a daughter-in-law," John Guerdon observed, after a pause, during which he had pulled his cob half round, so as to look backward, and satisfy himself that his groom was well in the rear.

Had he not known that a jest seldom failed to irritate his slow-witted sire, Albert, replying with an adaptation of Tom Sheridan's well-worn retort, would have asked, "Whose wife is she?" Refraining from flippancy, he merely inquired, "Indeed, sir! and who may the lady be?"

"She is a right good-looking girl," responded the father.

"So far, so good."

"Not so good-looking, I admit, as the young lady who is driving to Arleigh Manor with her

mamma, but tall, shapely, showy, and a gentlewoman."

"I am in love with her already," Albert observed lightly.

"She has neither brother nor sister," continued John Guerdon, setting forth the lady's favorable circumstances like an auctioneer describing an estate under the hammer, "so you would have no near connections on her side, getting you into scrapes, and bothering her for money. There's many a man who has good reason to wish his 'wife's family' at Jericho."

"Go on, sir."

"She has no father to have a voice about the settlement of her fortune, and to give you troublesome advice after marriage. What's more, she hasn't a mother. Think of that, Alb! you may have an heiress, without the incumbrance of a mother-in-law!"

"She is a prize, father."

"I believe you. She is a prize, and no mistake about it."

"Is she a ward in Chancery?"

"Not a bit of it. You would not even have to ask the Lord Chancellor's leave. Come, will you have her?"

"I must have some more particulars before I say 'yes.' I am a man of business, and won't make a blind bargain. Who on earth is she?"

"My ward, Blanche Heathcote."

"Why, sir, I have not seen her since she was a pale-faced slip of a thing, not more than twelve years old."

"She is a woman now, but not a year too old to be your wife. She may be something too white in the face, but her money is of the right color—gold! gold! gold! It's all monsoons fine and poetical for youngsters to rave and write poetry about girls with golden hair! But give me woman with a golden fortune!"

"I did not know she was so *very* rich," Albert rejoined, coldly and warily.

"I did not say she was *very* rich," responded John Guerdon, testily. "I only call her rich. There are wealthier girls in the market, but she has the birth and breeding and looks of a lady, as well as money." The banker added warmly, and almost indignantly, "You don't imagine I want you to make a mercenary match, do you?"

"I would not suggest the thought."

Again John Guerdon pulled his cob half round, so that he could look behind, and having satisfied himself that the servant on the rakish hack could not overhear them, he observed, in a lower voice, winking his eye once and again as he revealed the amount of his ward's fortune,

"I and Scrivener are the girl's trustees. She has £60,000 in the Consols, and a niceish farm within ten miles of the Great Yard. Four hundred and eighty acres of rich land are worth a goodish sum for agriculture. But ere long that farm will be found to be worth more than her money in the Funds." Stopping his cob, and speaking in a whisper, which indicated the importance of the intelligence, and the extent of the confidence which he was showing in his

son's discretion, John Guerdon added, "There's iron on it. Scrivener has found the iron. The fat grass-meadows and wheat-fields lie over a bed of iron that will make it one of the best mineral properties in Boringdonshire. Marry Blanche Heathcote, use some of her £60,000 in working the farm underground, and you'll be one of the richest men in the whole Hammerhampton country."

As the tempter thus revealed his scheme, a pallor came over the comely face, and a strange light issued from the dark eyes of the young man who was invited to enrich himself by wedding his father's ward. But Albert's agitation was in no degree due to fear that in a moment of weakness he might decide to sin against his higher nature. It was occasioned by the startling earnestness of his father's countenance, which seldom expressed any more vehement emotion than transient irritability. To Albert the earnestness was almost terrifying, for it demonstrated how strongly his father desired an acquiescence in a proposal to which the young man had already resolved not to consent.

"You'll think about it, Alb?" said John Guerdon, raising his voice, as he kicked his cob with his heel, and ambled away again at his customary speed.

"Yes, sir, I'll think about it."

"The girl, as you know," remarked the father, "is living with her aunt in Wales, in a pretty place they have on the Menai Straits. You like fishing, I suppose—or, at least, you can pretend to like it. Nothing would appear more natural to the ladies, and to our neighbors here, than that you should run off to Wales for a month's fishing. And being in Wales, you would of course run round to the Straits, and pay your respects to the ladies."

"I have said, sir, that I'll think about the matter—at present I can't say more," Albert replied, with as much coldness and stiffness as he was capable of exhibiting to a father for whom he cherished a strong affection, without admiring or even respecting him.

John Guerdon was no quick or nice observer, but from the tone of the last speech it was obvious to him that Albert wished to hear no more for the present about Blanche Heathcote or her property, and, out of a prudent regard for his son's feelings, the banker dropped the subject. For that morning he had done enough in the matter by warning his boy not to commit himself with Miss Darling. But there was no reason why he should not add a few thoughtful and moral reflections on the advantages and honor of matrimony.

CHAPTER VII.

WILD OATS AND THEIR SOWERS.

"EVERY young man," said the father, in an oracular tone, "should marry when he has sown his wild oats."

It being implied by the moralist's silence that he wished for his son's opinion of this wholesome axiom, Albert rejoined,

"Why should he not marry before he has sown them?"

"Because then he'd be sowing them after marriage, and then there'd be an awkward crop, and the devil to pay. Marriage is wheat; wild oats are like the tares of the parable. Wheat and wild oats don't go well together."

"It is not good husbandry to sow them together."

"Therefore, experience says to the young man, 'First sow your wild oats, and then go in for domestic virtue and business.' It's the providential order of things."

After the wont of stupid men, John Guerdon was in the habit of fathering the world's blunders and his own ridiculous notions on Providence.

"But if a young man has no wild oats to sow," inquired Albert, mischievously, "what should he do? Must he remain a bachelor till he has found a lot of bad seed, and thrown it upon fertile ground?"

John Guerdon, stubbornly,

"A young fellow always starts out in life with a lot of wild oats in his pockets. He does not look for them. Providence puts them in his pockets, and a beard on his chin, at the same time."

"I have known a few young men," Albert bore witness, "who never had any wild oats, as you call them."

"Perhaps so. Very likely. No doubt there are milksops in Germany and France as well as in England."

"But these fellows," Albert insisted, laughing out merrily, "were not milksops. They were the best of good fellows."

"Bah! If they weren't milksops, they were humbugs, who had got rid of their wild oats before you knew them, and then humbugged you into thinking they had always been pinks of propriety."

"All right, sir. Let it be so. They humbugged me, and I thank them for having deceived me," Albert replied, with perfect good humor.

Out of the courtesy in which he was not deficient, the father responded,

"They must have been clever fellows, though, to bamboozle you, for you are not a fool."

"Thank you, sir."

"Anyhow," continued the father, bluntly applying his moral doctrine, "you'll admit that you have had plenty of time for sowing your wild oats. If you haven't, make the most of the next year and half, for when you are a partner in 'Guerdon, Scrivener & Guerdon,' you must be respectable."

"I have had quite enough time."

"And by sending you abroad for your education, I arranged it for you that you should sow your wild oats where there would be no risk that the crop should trouble you in after-

life. 'Lord, remember not the sins of my youth.' The Lord mayn't; but the world is sure to remember a young man's sins, if they are not done snugly, so that the world can't find them out. So I sent you abroad to learn business, and enjoy yourself securely. A young rip's doings at Oxford and Cambridge are always reported to his father's neighborhood, and made the worst of. But Paris, and Naples, and Vienna are a long way off Hammerhampton. So I put you out in foreign capitals, and gave you a good allowance. One way or other you've cost me a good many thousands; but you were welcome to the money, and I never asked for particular accounts as to how you spent it. Why should I? You are your father's son, and I remember what a rip I was when I was on the school-house side of five-and-twenty. 'Boys will be boys all the world over.' And as you have come home for good, a young man of the right stuff and promise, it is no business of mine to ask how you sowed your wild oats, or where you sowed them, or how many varieties there were of them. It is enough for me that you have got rid of them, and that you won't be tattled about in the High Street of Hammerhampton."

Albert knew well what his father meant by "Boys will be boys all the world over." The familiar adage implied that youngsters delighted to imitate the vices of libertines who were no longer young. It implied that, if they were lads of spirit, they habitually drank more wine than was good for them, and often carried the indulgence to intoxication. It implied that, as a matter of course, they smoked excessively, and played for higher stakes than they could afford to lose at cards and billiards. It implied that they seized on every occasion to squander time and health in gross pleasure with depraving companions of both sexes. It implied that the freshness and energy of youth should be dissipated by sensual excitements, and that no young fellow should place his affections on a virtuous woman until his rakish experiences had taught him the disadvantages of familiarity with women who had neither virtue nor refinement. And Albert Guerdon resented the imputation that he was a boy whose boyhood had been spent unprofitably and viciously. Without being a prig, or that most irritating of social inflictions, an intrusively good young man, he detested the puerile profligacy and scampishness of beardless students who prided themselves on being "fast men." His years between eighteen and twenty-five had been a period of vivid enjoyments; but a young man's pleasures may be vivid, without being at the same time feverish and enervating.

He delighted in good music, and at each of the capitals, where he had studied human manners and the ways of commerce, he had been an habitual frequenter of the opera, without desiring to associate privately with artists of sweet voices and lax principles. He had studied the

drama from the stalls, instead of corners behind the scenes. A perfect horseman, he cared more for a gallop across open country than for waltzing in a ball-room, though he could acquit himself creditably in a Parisian *salon*. A sportsman, with no experience of Scottish grouse moors, he had killed wild boar and deer in German forests, and landed enormous salmon in Norway. His good sense preserved him from the affectations of studio haunters, and told him that he had no faculty for high achievements with brush or pencil; but he had studied painting and sculpture in foreign galleries, and could talk with artists on their special affairs with intelligence and modesty. At a time when Alpine climbing was no universal fashion of English tourists, he had made pedestrian excursions in Switzerland, and ascended Mont Blanc. In addition to these interests, any one of which is sometimes influential in keeping a youngster from evil courses, he had a taste for high literature, and, while altogether lacking the poet's creative genius, possessed enough poetic sensibility to appreciate grand poetry.

Of course he knew that his life, in its vigorous wholesomeness and avoidance of gross pleasures, differed greatly from that of many youngsters of his period. Brief though his career had been, he was old enough to have seen old school-fellows sink into premature graves, after losing health and character by sottishness. He had seen drink convert jovial fellows into dull fellows, and put them under the sod at the moment when their stronger or less moderate companions in license were recognizing the nature of their excesses, and deciding to undo as far as possible the mischief of their indiscretions. Some of his slighter acquaintances had fallen in duels about women of light fame. Of course, also, he was aware that his existence was altogether unlike the early manhood of his father, who had no mental quickness or intellectual tastes, and who belonged to the generation that selected Carlton House for its school of manners, and the Prince Regent for its model of gentlemanly virtue and accomplishments. But he was not the young man to pride himself on his superior sagacity and goodness. It was not in him to play the Pharisee to dissolute students of his own age. He was even more incapable of sitting in judgment on his own sire, and regretting censoriously that the old man had obvious failings, and had spent his early manhood wildly and gracelessly. On the contrary, he could listen with equanimity and amusement to John Guerdon's boastful exaggerations of his youthful misdemeanors. Indeed, while clearly recognizing his father's failings, Albert regarded them with tenderness, and was none the less inclined to show him respect because he was not from every point of view respectable.

But while he was charitable toward others Albert's judgment approved his own way of living, and, without desiring to be extolled as better than his neighbors, he wished to be taken

for what he was. He was pained at discovering that his father, regarding him as something altogether unlike his real self, looked upon him as at the best a young fellow who, after sowing his wild oats in foreign lands, was ready, from prudential motives, to "settle down" into a decent man of matrimony and business in Boringdonshire. The discovery was all the more unpleasant because his father's erroneous impressions respecting his way of living implied a disbelief in his truthfulness. It was true that John Guerdon had never required his son to give minute accounts of his expenditure. But though they had not been demanded, the accounts had been voluntarily rendered by Albert, who, in gratitude for his father's liberality, had never omitted to state precisely how he expended his income. He had always been singularly communicative to his sire, and would have deemed himself guilty of odious deceit had he qualified his statements to him with the slightest misrepresentation. He had never bought a costly piece of jewelry, or given a bank-note to a needy friend, or picked up a new horse, or humored his youthful fondness for personal display by purchasing an unusually expensive article of dress, without giving his father intelligence of the fact. It was the same with the cost of his holiday excursions. He had never made a trip without letting John Guerdon know what had been its expenses. Knowing his father's business-like care for pecuniary details, he had even sent him items of hotel bills; and he had always flattered himself that, while these exact communications had amused their receiver, the motives which occasioned them were properly appreciated by the munificent giver of money. After all, it seemed that his father must have regarded his accounts as misstatements. How else was it possible for the old man to imagine that his son had been squandering money as a sower of wild oats?

Albert, whose generous disposition did not lack a spice of irritability, was for the moment nettled. It was incumbent on his honor, and necessary for the maintenance of an agreeable understanding between himself and his father, that he should put his truth beyond suspicion. His father might, if he liked, imagine him capable of indulgence in pleasures from which he revolted. But the old man should not think him a humbug and a liar.

"Indeed, sir, you do me injustice," the son exclaimed.

"What the deuce do you mean?" the father inquired.

"You have been very liberal to me, sir," Alb explained. "No father could have been more generous in money matters. Indeed, in that respect, if your treatment of me has been faulty, it has only erred in the direction of excessive munificence. But I must entreat you to believe that I never abused your goodness by applying your gifts to disreputable purposes. You know how every sovereign of my money

has been spent. I have always accounted for it, though you never asked me to do so."

"Yes, yes," John Guerdon assented, winking his right eye, as he chuckled in his reply, "you always sent me your accounts."

"Well, sir?" asked Albert, flushing scarlet.

Having delivered himself of a running chuckle which almost rose into a peal of laughter, the banker continued, exultingly,

"Lord! Alb, how I have laughed over your accounts! How deucedly well you used to cook them! How I have laughed over them with Ned Barlow, whose boys have each of them spent twice as much money as you ever did, and never treated him with exemplary candor of your fashion. Lord! those accounts! They were wonderful! They were so well done that I almost think that they would have imposed on me, if they had not been so exact. Oh! Barlow and I have had many a laugh over your statements of expenditure. The very mention of them makes Ned roar-out so you can almost hear him from Hammerhampton to Minehead. He calls you 'the Accountant!' Now, Alb, tell us who put you up to the trick? You're a monseous clever fellow for a boy, but I can hardly imagine you thought of it all by yourself. Ha! ha! ha! Wait a minute, I am almost choking; and it takes away my mind to laugh in the saddle!"

John Guerdon was growing so alarmingly red in the face with delight at his own acuteness that Albert thought it best to postpone his reply till his father should have become calmer.

"When I was a boy," resumed John Guerdon, on recovering breath, "young fellows used to do a little in the way of cooking accounts for their fathers' satisfaction. The regular thing was to enter under the head of 'Charity and Benevolence' all sums that had been spent in mischief and high jinks. Ned Barlow says he used to do a great deal of charity and benevolence to ladies in distressed circumstances; but that was too simple for you. 'Ten pounds—a loan (that probably won't be returned) to a friend in difficulties.' 'Expenses of trip to Switzerland.' 'Twenty pounds fees to Professor Tolderol for lessons in crayon sketching.' 'Ditto—fees to Herr Folderol for instruction on the flute.' Ha! ha! ha! you look surprised! But you can't have supposed, Alb, that you succeeded in bamboozling me!"

"Doubtless I look surprised, father," returned Albert, in his stateliest manner, hoping by his tone and look to put an end to his sire's merriment, "for I am profoundly astonished."

This statement, so grandly uttered, failed to have the desired effect, for it appeared to Ned Barlow's intimate friend to be nothing else than the utterance of an actor persisting in an effort of humorous hypocrisy.

"At first you astonished me, Alb," chuckled the senior, "but I got used to it. You overdid it rather in quantity, and also in quality. You overdid it by being so precise about every

thing, and leaving no margin at all for peccadilloes and 'charity' of the general kind; and you carried on the fun a little bit too long. But I can forgive you, you young scoundrel, as you did not make a fool of me."

Looking steadily into his father's dull eyes, Albert Guerdon said seriously—very impressively, but without any sign of irritation:

"On my honor, father, you are altogether mistaken. I assure you, sir, on my honor, that I have never made to you a single statement about money or any other matter, in the whole course of my life, that was not precisely true."

But the asseveration was futile. The slowness and emphasis with which it was uttered, and the look of earnest honesty which accompanied it, were altogether lost on John Guerdon, who winked his right eye once more, and then responded, in a tone which implied that he was slightly scandalized by his son's fervor,

"Pooh! pooh! don't try to get over me in that way. You shouldn't pledge your honor in that way for a bit of fun. A joke is a joke, and yours was a monseous good one; but it mayn't be carried too far."

Making yet another vain attempt to set himself right with his father, Albert said, even more seriously,

"Indeed I am speaking the truth. Boys may be boys, all the world over, but I am not the boy you take me for."

"Don't be a pogram and a humbug," retorted the father, testily. "I am not such a fool as you take me for."

And as he gave his heir this demonstration of his shrewdness and reasonableness, John Guerdon's comely face assumed a look of unconquerable stubbornness and lively derision. The beetling brows drew closely together, as his lips contracted into a disdainful pout. In another instant he had thrust a rolled-up tongue through the protruding lips, and twisted his mouth slightly on one side. To add force to this singular and very disfiguring piece of facial pantomime, the banker nodded his head half a dozen times with an air of resentful obstinacy.

Albert was mortified, but, in spite of his annoyance, amused. His momentary ebullience of temper having subsided, he was more grieved than angry. It was painful to him to see how completely his moral nature, as well as his intellect, lay beyond the limits of his father's comprehension. It saddened him to think that his own father deemed him a cautious libertine and systematic fabricator of lies—a puerile rake, who was chiefly commendable for the skill with which he concealed his vices, and a graceless son, who could amuse himself by a prodigious series of endeavors to play upon the credulity of an indulgent father. At the same time, the position was extremely ridiculous, and the young man's sense of humor was tickled by its absurdity. It being clear that nothing further could be done to disabuse the paternal mind of its misconceptions, Albert Guerdon

consoled himself by regarding the pleasant aspects of the difficulty.

But he had no inclination to renew the chat with his father.

Emperor suddenly became restive, and, as the animal persisted in starting, fidgeting, and bucking about, with every sign that he would like to stretch his limbs in a gallop, Albert bade his father farewell at the entrance to the Earl's Court hay fields, and gave his steed congenial exercise.

Having watched his boy canter up a bridle-path, in the direction of a heath, where he would find free space for a breathing gallop, John Guerdon rode onward to his hay-makers, saying to himself,

"Smart fellow, that boy of mine! It was very attentive of him to meet me at Owleybury; but it was monstrous impudent of him to stick to those lies of his. Boys are apt not to see when they have carried a joke far enough. I was very nearly provoked into giving him a hot word or two, for which I should have been sorry. Perhaps I had better keep clear of that subject, for in the main he is a good boy, and he takes kindly to my scheme for marrying him to Blanche Heathcote. That's a comfort!"

CHAPTER VIII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

"It is beautiful!" Lottie exclaimed, as the carriage turned into the grounds of Arleigh Manor, and rolled over the smooth coach-road toward her father's house. "It is a picture, a poem, a work of nature and art! It is the same place that I saw last winter, but so beautified that I should scarcely have recognized it. Look at the trees—the graceful limes, those magnificent elms, and the dainty birches! There is the Luce again, and there are the Flocktonshire Hills! How grandly Minehead stands out! And what a garden of roses, and brightness, and greenness! The loveliness of every thing startles me at every turn. Mamma, the place is heavenly!" Seizing Lady Darling's hand, and kissing it, the girl cried, "Mother, how happy we shall be in this charming home—dear, dear mother!"

The word "mother" never sounds more musically and lovingly than when it comes from a pair of coy lips that say "mamma" daintily.

The girl's enthusiasm only rendered justice to beauties which she surveyed. An antiquated manor-house, that had for centuries been the homestead of a line of gentle yeomen, whose lineage gave them rank among the squires of the county, notwithstanding the smallness of their estate, Arleigh had fallen, some five-and-twenty years since, into the hands of an iron-master, of taste as well as money. The man of iron had enlarged the residence with a front that accorded with the original structure of red stone, while affording its inmates two noble

rooms of reception, and a hall big enough for a castle. Having thus converted a modest though highly picturesque dwelling into a structure which could almost claim to be honored as a "country house," the capitalist amused himself for twenty years with adorning the grounds, so that, when the good man died, no place of its size within twenty miles of Owleybury had such a show of well-grown and judiciously planted trees. The house, also, was singularly fortunate in its landscapes and natural defense against cold winds. Built on the under ridge of a majestic hill, it was guarded on the north and east by the upper ridge, that rose abruptly behind it, while on the south and west it commanded a superb view of Flocktonshire and the Valley of the Luce.

Sir James Darling congratulated himself on his good fortune in getting possession of Arleigh Manor for a moderate rent, and on a renewable lease, that would, as he grimly remarked, "fairly see him out." Having no desire to acquire "land of his own" in the shire of his jurisdiction, he was delighted on these terms to become a tenant of Lord Slumberbridge, who had bought Arleigh when the iron-master's death put it in the market. A place sufficient for the domestic needs of a gentleman living at the rate of four or five thousand a year, it was not too grand for the means of a tenant with only £2500 per annum, the precise amount of the income which Sir James had at his disposal, when he had paid his annual allowance to his two military sons, each of whom had a small property independent of his father's pleasure.

It was still broad daylight when Lottie, at the close of her homeward journey, surveyed the foliage and flower-beds of the Arleigh gardens. But the softening light, which at midsummer precedes sunset by several hours, was falling from the blue and almost cloudless sky on the undulating lawns and bright parterres. The display of roses was magnificent. There were bushes resting upon the ground, and beaded with tiny buds and rounded, pearly blossoms. There were standards of the choicest species known to rose-gardeners, that exhibited superb flowers of every color, between the faintest amber and the deepest crimson, any one of which would have been a worthy adornment for a ball-room belle. And the smooth turf of delicate lawn-grass, enriched with the finest Dutch clover, was brightened with artfully disposed growths of petunias and verbenas. On alighting from the carriage at the door of the grand conservatory, which was in fact the vestibule of the manor-house, Lottie looked through an avenue of geraniums and pelargoniums, fuchsias, cactuses, and gigantic ferns.

The next two hours were spent in agreeable surprises. Having refreshed herself with tea—a drink occasionally taken by ladies between luncheon and dinner, in days when "afternoon tea" was no regular usage of a luxurious household—Lottie accompanied her mother throughout the house, and inspected one by one the

rooms which she had left at the end of her last holidays in disorder or incomplete rehabilitation. Her mother and father were not deficient in taste; and Sir James Darling had spared no expense in beautifying the house in which he proposed to pass the remainder of his days. Lottie was delighted with the general effect and details of every apartment that she entered. She greeted with enthusiasm, as though they were living things, and could respond to her rapturous exclamations, the old familiar pictures which, since her last departure from Brighton, had been brought down from Upper Bedford Place, Russell Square, to the southwest corner of Boringdonshire. She gave a perfect cry of joy as she espied, in a corner of her mother's elegant drawing-room, the tiny, antique chair—quaintly carved and blackened with age and bees-wax—which had been her peculiar seat in the "old home" in London. But the girl's delight did not reach its height until she had feasted her blue eyes on the manifold charms of "her own room," which Lady Darling, in welcome of her youngest offspring, had made resplendent with bouquets of the finest and sweetest flowers that could be found in her garden and green-house.

"What shall the girl do in gratitude," asked Lottie, in her happiest style of cooing tenderness, as she seated herself on the sofa of her sleeping-room by Lady Darling's side, "to the mother who has done all this for her?"

"Kiss her, Lottie—that's enough," answered Mary Darling.

"But kisses are such cheap things, and so easily given," rejoined Lottie, in a tone of playful dissatisfaction.

"Then give them freely, and never tire of giving them," the mother responded when she had taken a first installment of the cheap endearments.

"And then, dearest," cooed Lottie, smoothing her mother's gentle face with a caressing hand, "it is such a gladness to give them. You are so very lovely, and so very good. Every kiss I give you increases my debt to you, and my desire to—"

"Not to make it lighter, child," Mary Darling interposed, gayly. "Is the debt too heavy for your pride?"

"No, no," Lottie protested. "That is the marvel of it, dearest. The debt is so enormous, and yet light as air. Every effort by which I try to diminish it only adds to its largeness; and the more it grows, the lighter it becomes."

"By all means, then, endeavor to pay the debt off at once," laughed the creditor.

"I wish I could reduce it by some measures that should cost me trouble and pain," Lottie replied. "I wish that I could prove my love by some way less selfish and agreeable than the delight of loving you. Indeed, indeed, dearest, I should like to sacrifice myself for you."

"And be my benefactor," was the bantering rejoinder. "Ah! Lottie, Lottie, you are a proud girl, and would like to patronize your mother."

Whereupon Lottie implored, "No, no, don't say that." And, seeing from her mother's smile that she was inclined to repeat the accusation, Lottie slipped from the sofa to her knees, and putting herself in humblest posture of entreaty, exclaimed, with mingled drollery and fervor, "I am at your feet, mamma, your own docile, loving little girl, as I was in the old days, when I was only a very tiny one."

"Those old days," murmured the mother, "that are so far away, and yet so near." And then, as tears came to her eyes at a sudden flooding up of tenderest recollections from the past, Mary Darling suddenly entreated, "But don't play in that way—don't Lottie, or I shall be crying like a simpleton."

At the moment when she was on the point of "crying like a simpleton," Lady Darling's eye fell on the small time-piece that stood on her daughter's dressing-table, and told that in another minute it would be six o'clock. Seven was the hour of dinner, when Sir James Darling would expect to see his daughter in full toilet.

"It is later than I thought, and you must be dressing for dinner," observed the mother, rising hastily from her seat. "As soon as I have done with Hannah, she shall come to you to dress your hair. Look your very best, pet, when you give papa his first kiss. The box we brought with us from Owleybury shall be brought up to you immediately. The rest of your luggage will have arrived before you go to bed. You'll have enough to do in the next hour."

With Hannah's assistance, Lottie had set herself off to the best advantage when she entered the drawing-room shortly before the dinner-hour. She had donned a light dress, that displayed her delicately modeled arms, small neck, and the faultless shape of her white shoulders. Her rich brown hair was decked with two roses—one of softest amber color, the other a deep crimson—that she had selected from a vase of cut flowers, each of which might have carried off a prize at a horticultural show. Round her throat she wore the necklace of cameos which her father had given her on her last birthday.

"Charming, charming! You are a good girl!" observed Lady Darling when, on joining Lottie in the drawing-room, she saw how completely the girl had obeyed her last maternal injunction. Lottie's complexion brightened momentarily at her mother's approval; two minutes later it brightened again, and her heart beat quickly, as she heard her father's steps in the hall.

Though she was not always conscious of the fact, and would have vehemently denied it had the truth been submitted to her in blunt terms, Lottie Darling stood in awe of her father. Of course she loved him in a dutiful and conventional fashion; she would have regarded him tenderly had he resembled some hot-tempered and overbearing fathers, and been a domestic bully. As it was, her affection for him, though deep and fervent, was not devoid of a certain

vague, ever-present fear of displeasing him. The mutual sympathy of the girl and her mother was perfect; but there was a distance, which her historian can not describe precisely, and which she never permitted herself to recognize, between Lottie's heart and her father's. She was inordinately proud of him, believing him to be the most learned of England's judges, and in every respect save bodily stature the grandest of living men. Some of the ways in which this filial pride displayed itself were no less droll than pretty. "Papa says so," was a form of words with which she had often closed a discussion on a debatable question. So far as she was concerned, every debate ended when she had declared her sire's judgment on it with an air of authoritative dignity. Repeatedly had Lottie stolen unobserved into her father's library, in the old home hard by Russell Square, and gazed with tranquil satisfaction at the outward lettering on a certain calf-bound work, in two octavo volumes, entitled "A Treatise on the Law and History of Church Rates, by James Rust Darling, M.A., Barrister-at-Law, of the Inner Temple." In these secret visits to the lawyer's book-room, Lottie never took from their central place in a conspicuous shelf the tomes which she regarded so reverentially, and prized all the more because they dealt with matters altogether beyond her comprehension. But, while she thus kept the fifth commandment, she feared slightly the father whom she honored completely.

How had this come to pass? James Rust Darling was an amiable man. In all great matters he was a considerate and indulgent father. He had never whipped Lottie when she was in the nursery, nor scolded her when she was a ten-year-old lass, nor snubbed her in her riper girlhood. In a certain sense he had been an admirably thoughtful as well as a conscientious parent. There had never been an anniversary of her birthday on which he had forgotten to give her a present—a toy, or book, or trinket, or piece of brave costume. At this crisis of her young life, the ending of her school-days, there stood in a certain stall of his stables a living example of the forethought and liberality with which he supplied her wants. And yet she feared the sire who had never spoken an unkind word to her, or put himself into a passion in her presence, or scolded son or servant within her hearing. The cause of the distance between them can be told in a brief sentence. Sir James Rust Darling was formal, pedantic, and pompous. Formality and pompousness are apt to repel the timid and loving. There are gentle and nicely sensitive natures that are affected by pedantic stiffness, just as harder dispositions are affected by severity. And Lottie was finely sensitive, though her temper was faultless. She unconsciously shrank from the frigid, magisterial authoritative of the gentleman who had played the part of judge under his own roof, long before he had been invited to fill the

judicial seat in the court-house of Purley, of which lethargic borough he was the learned recorder. His frigid self-importance had done more to put her at a distance from him than much positive harshness would have done had he in his kindly moments been more genial and emotional. Sir James Darling was very proud of the girl, and desired her love almost to the limits of jealousy. But he had missed what he desired, because he could not see that, to win the perfect and unconstrained love of such a child, a father must woo her like a lover, while cherishing her like a good parent.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR JAMES DARLING AT HOME.

WHEN Sir James Darling had crossed the threshold of the drawing-room, and, stopping at the door, had drawn himself up to the fullness of his small stature, Lottie Darling was in the presence of a well-looking and stately little gentleman, whose height did not exceed five feet five inches, and whose florid countenance contrasted strikingly with the snowiness of his high cravat and the whiteness of his high forehead. Had the breadth of his frontal configuration corresponded with its height, the judge would have had a good head; but the narrowness of his forehead accorded with the sharpness of his profile, and the general keenness of his shrewdly expressive face.

His eyes were piercing, although age had given them tell-tale rings; his nose was slightly aquiline, and his finely modeled lips and chin declared that he was a gentleman of refinement. His eyebrows were strongly marked with iron-gray hair, that was bushy and harsh, and much darker than the hair of his head. When he was not wearing his professional wig, strangers saw at a glance that Sir James was more than slightly bald on the crown of his head—a defect which he vainly endeavored to hide by brushing his iron-gray hair upward from his temples into two tufts that bore a strong resemblance to the standing ears of certain inferior animals. These hirsute tufts were all the more remarkable because, while sable-silvered at the base, they were quite white at their tips. But his rather grotesque coiffure was less objectionable than the sanguine brightness of his closely shaven cheeks and the vermilion splendor of his aquiline nose. He was a uniformly good-tempered man, but his complexion made the world imagine that he was irascible and overbearing.

On seeing her father at the entrance of the long drawing-room, Lottie rose, and lowering her figure by some four inches, put herself in position to salute him with a solemn Hanover Square courtesy. The act was due partly to school-girls' habit, and partly to timidity. It was rather ridiculous, but, under the circumstances, was natural. But the girl's heart was

beating too hotly, and with too impetuous a gladness, to allow her to complete the movement of reverence. In another instant she performed an act of filial obeisance that was more graceful and eloquent than any ceremonious gesture taught by Madame Bourbonnade. Running lightly toward her sire, she put a trembling hand on each of his shoulders, and kissed him timidly, first on one scarlet cheek, and then on the other. Save that it assumed a faint smile, the father's face betrayed no emotion at the kisses which he accepted, without returning them at once.

"Ah! Lottie, back from school?—back from school?" remarked Sir James, kindly but stiffly, and with an air of surprise at an event to which he had been looking forward with feverish eagerness for at least ten days.

"Yes, papa, and very glad to be home again," responded Lottie, still hovering over her little poppy-red sire, who was a full inch shorter than the girl.

"And have you been a good girl this half-year, eh?"

"Miss Constantine gives me a fair character, and I bring home some prizes," Lottie replied, with the meekness and simplicity of a ten-year-old infant.

"That's well—that's well, my dear! And you look in excellent and very charming health. 'Pon my honor, yes, you've grown quite a charming young lady."

There was much earnestness, and no sign of a disposition toward mirth, in the daughter's voice and face, as she answered,

"It is very good of you, papa, to tell me so. It is a happiness to me to be told that you are pleased with me."

"Then be happy, my child," the benign parent rejoined, superbly, as he took one of his daughter's hands and led her up the drawing-room, keeping her from him at the distance of a full arms-length, so that he could get a complete view of her face and figure, "for your papa is pleased with you."

Having led her to the middle of the room, Sir James stopped, and bringing Lottie face to face with himself, observed graciously,

"And now Lottie shall be kissed, once for a welcome" (kiss given), "and again for having been a good girl at school" (second kiss given), "and a third time for coming home with her best looks upon her."

Having bestowed a third kiss on his smiling daughter, Sir James turned from her, glanced at the French clock on the mantel-piece, and then, looking toward his wife, said, in a tone of mild expostulation,

"Tis five minutes after the hour, my dear, and dinner has not been announced."

"Probably Henry has waited to announce dinner till you should have entered the drawing-room," Lady Darling suggested, "and had time to exchange greetings with Lottie." A suggestion that was countenanced by the opportune appearance of pink-eyed Henry.

During dinner Lottie Darling gossiped to her father in girlish fashion about the incidents of her long journey, as young people fresh from a few hours of travel through unfamiliar scenes are wont to gossip over their latest adventures. She described the bustle at the London Bridge station, and how she had seen iron rolled into fiery ribbons at Hammerhampton. Sir James smiled at her vivid portraiture of Mr. Guerdon, senior, as he appeared on the Hammerhampton platform among his admirers; and he laughed heartily as she reproduced, with the slightest dash of malicious mimicry, the conversation which the two "quite common persons" had held about pig-iron, and plates, and the rates of labor. And when the piquant artist in small talk told how and why it was clear to her that Charley and his friend had been partially deafened by the incessant hammering of their daily haunts, her father laid his fork upon his plate, and paused in his enjoyment of a piece of green apricot tart, in order that he might indulge in a fit of screaming merriment. The learned man's eyes sparkled, and for the moment his manner lost its stiffness. Lady Darling had never known him condescend so completely to one of his children, and, like a good wife, she began to imagine the benefit he might derive from the girl's brightening companionship.

"Ah!" thought Mary Darling, with gentle sadness, "that is how he used to laugh when he was a young man, without a single gray hair, and I was a strong girl. I try to be cheerful, but my spirits fail me sometimes."

As for Sir James, he mentally congratulated himself, at least half a dozen times during dinner, on having a satisfactory daughter; and was of Lady Darling's opinion that the manor-house would be all the more agreeable for having a young and lovely girl in it. His pleasure was so vivid and strong that for a brief while he altogether lost sight of his dignity, and never thought of asking himself whether, as an English father, he was justified in showing his youngest offspring how vastly he was delighted with her.

When he dined at home, with only his own people, it was Sir James's wont to sip a pint of "good old port" after his dinner, and then take half an hour's nap, before seeking coffee in the drawing-room. To-day Lottie's influence caused him to modify the ordinary procedure. When his wife and child had quitted the dining-room, he relished neither his solitude nor his glass of '20 port. The wine, good sample though it was of a vintage rapidly rising to the fullness of its flavor and fame, seemed to have lost its finest delicacy. As it passed his critical palate the drinker wondered what had happened to the drink, whose merits failed to engross his attention and fill him with contentment. He finished it less for the enjoyment's sake than out of nervous regard for his "system," which might suffer in some mysterious way, if it were not provided with its habitual quantum of the generous stimulant. Having

done his duty to his "system," Sir James Darling threw a kerchief over his head, and composed himself in his easy-chair for slumber; but sleep shunned the voluptuous lures of the bandana. And yet the restless knight forbore to murmur at his wakefulness. He brimmed over with self-complacency and paternal satisfaction.

It being a lovely evening, he determined to carry Lottie off from her mother, and take her round the gardens. With this purpose, he put the silk bandana in his pocket, placed a straw hat on his whitened tufts, and, presenting himself at an open window of the drawing-room, invited Lottie to accompany him.

The girl was pleased with the proposal, and with her light hand on his arm, and her light dress floating by his side, Sir James Darling spent the next half-hour far more agreeably than in snoring away under the folds of his handkerchief. After going the round of the flower-beds, the father and daughter withdrew from the turf, on which the evening dew was falling, and took a turn on the graveled terrace. "No, we won't look at the stables to-night," said the judge, to a suggestion made by the young lady; "but to-morrow morning, before I start for Grimeswick, where I hold a late court, I must take your opinion on my latest purchase in horseflesh. Let us return now to mamma—for coffee and music."

On re-entering the drawing-room, they found the apartment lighted, and the judge's cup of black coffee ready for him. Lottie was provided with a cup of weak tea, that would not give her troublous dreams; and when she had refreshed herself with the mild beverage, she seated herself at the piano, in obedience to papa's orders, and played one of her last year's "pieces." That done, the applauded performer warbled two of her father's favorite ballads, playing the instrumental accompaniment of the words. And then, at Lady Darling's suggestion that a girl who had risen at six o'clock, and traveled from Brighton to Boringdonshire in the day, would do wisely to retire betimes for the night, Lottie went off to bed.

It was indicative of Lottie's new power over her father that, on seeing her rise for departure, the little gentleman sprang to his feet, and, hastening to the end of the long *salon*, opened the door for her in his most gallant style. Had she been a duchess, he could not have bowed to her more deferentially as she sailed toward him. Staying in her retreat, when she had come within a yard of him, Lottie repaid his politeness with a courtesy that would have made Madame Bourbonnade slap her fat hands applaudingly. Lottie was still at the lowest point of the graceful descent, when, looking upward with arch roguishness at the receiver of the reverence, she gave him a smile that brought to his keen eyes a light such as the girl had never before beheld in them. The look called her to him, and she obeyed it impulsively. In an instant she had leaped from

her lowly posture, and thrown both her arms round his neck. Ten seconds later she was climbing the grand staircase which the iron-master had raised in the manor-house, and was thinking to herself, "I never knew till to-night how he loves me. I shall never be afraid of him again."

On resuming his seat, Sir James Darling straightened his back, and, putting on his most consequential look, inquired of his wife,

"My dear, did you observe?"

"I saw that you opened the door for Lottie," returned Lady Darling.

"I never did such a thing before."

"My dear James, you seldom omit to open the door for me when I leave the room."

"I trust, Mary, that I am seldom forgetful to do so. But Lottie is only my daughter."

"I was pleased to see you render her the attention. She is a girl to notice and appreciate it."

"There was no harm in it?"

"None."

"I did not lay aside my paternal dignity too completely?" inquired the father, tossing up his little chin with comical uprightness.

"By no means, James. A father's dignity is never compromised by graciousness toward his children."

Re-assured on this point, Sir James Darling next thought of the effects which his condescension would have on Lottie.

"And it won't," he asked, "do her any harm? It won't 'set her up' too much, eh? She is a charming girl—in point of fact, a very lovely young woman; but still she must be kept in a state of subordination to authority. It would be a great pity if she should think too much of herself."

Lady Darling smiled at the notion, as she said,

"Lottie will never do that. She is diffident and modest to a fault."

"A girl, my dear Mary, can never think too lowly of herself."

"I do not altogether agree with you, James," rejoined Lady Darling, who, though she was an exemplary wife, and liked to be governed in all important matters by her husband, could sometimes find courage to differ from him.

"As a general rule, it is better to repress grown-up girls than to inspire them with self-esteem."

"Some girls, doubtless, need a discipline of repression; but Lottie is so nervous, and docile, and loyally submissive to her betters, that you would do more wisely to encourage her in self-reliance than to remind her of her dependence on others."

"Then, Mary," Sir James asked, "you would not think me condescending too far if I were to make it my habit to open the door for her?"

"Now that she has left school, dear, I would advise you to treat her in every particular with the politeness which you would be sure to exhibit to her if she were not your daughter. Treat

her as far as possible as you treat me, James, and you will train her to know how a perfect gentleman should bear himself toward her."

"Pon my honor, Mary, that's very nicely put. You possess singular felicity of expression and rare colloquial tact." After a pause, during which the judge meditated on his wife's excellence in the art of putting things, and accounted for it satisfactorily, he added, "But then, you have been my wife for thirty years."

Flattering him exquisitely, because it was obvious that she spoke from her heart, and had no intention to flatter him, Mary rejoined,

"Thirty years!—they have been very happy years, James."

Sir James Darling made no reply. He was thinking about his charming daughter, and resolving that he would henceforth treat her as though she were as nearly his equal as a woman could be.

"But," he observed, when he had silently considered this matter, "when you see me offering Lottie all those little daily attentions that you have hitherto regarded as due to no woman but yourself, you may grow jealous of the child."

"Jealous of my own child!—preposterous!" Mary Darling exclaimed, indignantly. "If I had the nerve to scold you, James, I would scold you now, for I am quite angry enough to do it."

"Is it impossible for a fairly good woman to be jealous of her own daughter?"

"I only spoke of myself, and no other fairly good woman."

"Well, I can confess, Mary, that I was very jealous of that eldest boy of yours, when he was a baby, and I saw that it gave you more pleasure to hover over his cradle in the nursery than to sit with me in your little drawing-room in the winter evenings. I was hotly jealous when you deserted me again and again for the society of a little squealing manikin."

Mary Darling's eyes brightened, as she asked seriously,

"Do you really mean what you say? No; you are playing, James."

"I am speaking the truth," Sir James answered, vehemently. "I was thoroughly jealous of the boy before he was twelve months old, and I fancied that I should never grow to like him."

Mary Darling's heart was stirred at a newly discovered proof of her lord's goodness. The foolish woman was always finding a new instance of his virtue. Fortunately for him, instead of weeping over each fresh discovery, she was content to smile, and exult over it quietly.

"I never imagined it, James; and, though the merest suspicion of it would have pained me then, I am very glad to know it now. How noble it was of you to keep your dissatisfaction from my knowledge, and always to appear as if you loved the boy heartily! Not one man in ten thousand could have concealed his jealousy out of pure care for his wife's happiness."

"Tut, tut!" responded the little man, laying aside his pomposity, and for once declining to take one of Mary's readings of his nature, "I won't be a humbug. It was selfishness and policy that made me behave like a sensible man, when I was almost a fool. In my jealousy I was deucedly afraid that I had lost your heart forever, and certain that by revealing the state of the case I should lessen my chance of recovering the first place in your love. So I held my tongue, played the hypocrite, and soon cut out my unconscious little rival."

Rising, when she had heard this droll and perfectly true confession, Mary Darling said,

"And now I am going to desert you for another rival, who won't close her eyes, tired as she is, until she has had a kiss from mamma. Pray don't trouble yourself to open the door for me. I give you free leave to slight me, if you'll only be good enough to woo my daughter!"

CHAPTER X.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

LIKE most gentlemen of his time, Sir James Darling took snuff. Unlike them, he was also a smoker. The Bar led the way in the revival of smoking, which was generally regarded as an obsolete and vulgar practice by the snuff-takers of the Regency. Indeed, the Bar may be said to have brought the proper use of the gentle weed into fashion again. Sir James had never put his lips to meerschaum or "church-warden," but he enjoyed a good cigar, and smoked one every evening. When he had no companion but his cigar, it was his wont to peruse a few pages of Thucydides, while the benign herb tranquilized and quickened his mind. Sir James had received his preliminary education at Oxford, and was of opinion that an Oxford man ought to "keep up his classics."

Having dispatched his cigar, and paid less than his usual attention to the historian's luminous page, Sir James went to his dressing-room, and, in due course, to his sleeping apartment. On entering which luxurious chamber, all that he could see of Lady Darling was a faint, gentle face, resting on a pillow, and surmounted by a lace-edged muslin cap, which, though a dainty and rather coquettish article for its date in the nineteenth century, would be ridiculed nowadays by critical gentlemen as an outrageously "mobbish" contrivance.

The room was so lighted by tapers on the toilet-table and mantel-piece that the master of Arleigh Manor could see at a glance that his wife was wide awake. He could also survey his reflection in the high cheval-glass.

Sir James had divested himself of his black integuments and starched cravat, and had enveloped himself in a softly padded dressing-gown of crimson silk. His head was crowned with a yellow turban, made of a silk handkerchief deftly folded, on principles known only to

the wearer. It is believed that the judge did not sleep in his crimson robe, but there is good authority for saying that he wore his turban throughout the hours of repose. Altogether, as he stood before the mirror, and regarded himself with generous self-satisfaction, the gentleman looked more like a gorgeous wingless bird than a judge of one of Her Majesty's county courts.

"Yes, Mary, our girl is a very charming girl," he observed, graciously, while he continued to study his brilliant plumage, and sharp features, and little corrugated neck, that looked painfully like the neck of a plucked fowl.

"She is lovely!" Lady Darling rejoined, with enthusiasm. "You should have seen her just now, when she was on the point of falling asleep."

"In certain points," continued the judge, "she bears a very considerable resemblance to you. But upon the whole she derives her good looks from her father's family. The Darlings have never been deficient in personal attractiveness. Yes, Mary, she has your smile and expression, but she has my nose, my chin, my lips, and my complexion."

When Lady Darling was tempted to reply saucily to her husband or laugh at his foibles, it was her wont to count ten to herself. On the present occasion she counted twenty, and came victoriously out of a conflict with temptation.

"Of course," remarked Sir James, when he had admired himself deliberately, and stated the most obvious points of his likeness to his child, "the world will make much of her, for her nature is as faultless as her face. Ah! I wish her sister had as sweet a disposition. When we have given Connie a sound pair of lungs, we must do our best for the poor girl's temper."

Though Connie's perversity and petulance had caused Mary Darling many bitter tears and many a cruel heart-ache, the mother would never allow any one to condemn the faulty girl. Connie had been sent to her uncle at Nice, as much for the benefit that new influences might do her temper as for the good that a milder climate might do her bodily health. In truth, the doctors spoke lightly of her pulmonary weakness, while her papa and mamma made much of it to the world, in order that, having a sufficient reason for her absence from England, their neighbors might not suspect the stronger and more distressing cause of her foreign residence. From her childhood, Connie had been the "skeleton of the closet" of James Darling's household. She had been Mary Darling's "cross"—a cross that the mother strove to bear in silence. One of Lady Darling's first objects was to keep from Lottie's knowledge the extent of her sister's misdemeanors; and hitherto the mother's purpose in this respect had been so far successful that Lottie only regarded the wayward Connie (just three years her senior) as an eccentric invalid, who was at

times "quite queer, and rather difficult to deal with."

"Connie will do well enough," Lady Darling said, with a coldness which intimated that she would not allow even her husband to speak slightly of his absent daughter. "Most girls have a few failings to outgrow, and Connie will outgrow hers, which, thank Heaven, are not so serious as some girls'. And I am sure, James, the letters we get from Nice—her aunt's letters as well as her own—warrant us in hoping confidently for the best."

Sir James shook his head doubtfully; but, like a good husband, he withdrew from the forbidden ground.

"Anyhow we may be proudly hopeful for Lottie," he said. "Making full allowance for parental partiality (an allowance that my judicial mind is well qualified to make), I am of opinion, my dear, that the girl is as nearly perfect as a girl can be. I almost wish that her excellences were less obvious."

"Pray don't wish that, James," entreated the face on the pillow.

"As it is, she will be leaving us directly," explained Sir James, giving utterance to the very thought that had been secretly troubling Mary for a full fortnight, and had caused her at least three quite sleepless nights.

"Why, my dear James," exclaimed the gentle hypocrite, with well-acted surprise, "the girl has not at present a single invitation for a staying visit."

Throwing his turbaned head backward, the judge replied,

"But she soon will have one."

"Who is going to ask her?"

"Heaven knows! Some self-sufficient, insolent young fellow, perhaps, who'll imagine that he pays me a great compliment, and lays me under a weighty obligation by depriving me of the treasure which I value beyond all my other possessions, with the exception of you, my dear. Of course, Mary, with the exception of you."

"Don't talk so, James, you'll frighten me."

"That's the kind of benefactor," Sir James continued, cynically and rather fiercely, "who'll very soon—next year, next month, next week—ask Lottie to come to him for a staying visit that won't end in a hurry. Perhaps he'll be a Scotchman, who will carry her off to the Highlands, and graciously permit us to visit his castle and captive once in every two or three years; or, may be, if he is an exceptionally benignant gentleman, he'll be so good as to carry our pet off to India or Japan, and keep her there till we are dead. It is too bad that parents should be required to submit to such marauders. It was better in the days of Marriage by Capture than it is now; for then, if a man tried to carry off your daughter, you might put a knife into him, or knock him down with a bludgeon; but nowadays the worst that you may do to him is to ask him to dinner, and put the table's-length between him and his prey."

"You mean," rejoined the face on the pillow, "that, sooner or later, Lottie will marry?"

"Pardon me, Mary," replied the small gentleman, drawing the skirts of his crimson dress more closely over a pair of not prodigious legs, and then folding his arms over his breast, after the dignified fashion of the First Napoleon, there's no 'later' in the question. I wish that so lovely a girl could marry 'later,' and to our liking. She'll be sure to marry 'sooner,' and the great danger is that she may be carried off by some pert jackanapes, whom you won't be able to like, and I shall detest."

"The danger has occurred to me."

"Indeed! Eh? The thought is not new to you?"

"How should it be, James? If you are her father, I am her mother. Of course I fear what you fear."

"Well, we must hope for the best, and in the mean time enjoy her company while we have it."

"Would it not be well," suggested the pillowed face, "that we should anticipate events, and control them as far as possible? Would it not be well that we should provide against the danger, and choose a suitor to our taste who will make her happy in this neighborhood? Of course we would not constrain her affections, but we might influence her judgment, and even decide her choice."

"Humph! in this neighborhood?"

"I could not consent to any match that would take her to India or Japan. It would almost break my heart to think that, in two or three years' time, she would be taken from me to a home so far away as the Highlands."

In his driest and most matter-of-fact tone, Sir James replied,

"Boringdonshire, though rich and populous, has not many young men of the style and quality for our girl."

"Owlebury is a cathedral town," rejoined Mary, "and a centre of clerical life, and, through your old friendship with the bishop, we are well known in the clerical circle. Lottie would be well enough placed if, with her modest fortune, she were to marry a rector with good preferment."

"Boringdonshire has few good livings, and in this corner of the county they are very poor."

"But rich men often hold small livings. Of course I don't wish to see her a poor clergyman's wife."

"I don't wish her to marry a clergyman."

"Neither do I."

Having made that admission, Lady Darling pointed to another class of persons, among whom the daughter of a county court judge might find a husband without losing caste.

"In this manufacturing and commercial district," she said, "there is no lack of gentlemen who have enriched themselves by the industries of the Great Yard."

Sir James shuddered as he ejaculated,

"Good heavens, Mary! you don't want for your son-in-law an iron-master, who can talk about nothing but his pig-iron and contracts?"

"Some of the iron-masters are in every respect gentlemen; I have heard you say so."

"So I have; so they are."

"There is Mr. Bloxham, of Newton Court—a most clever and delightful gentleman. His sons, who are just now in Norway, are most agreeable young men. Lottie might do worse than marry one of them. She would be rich, and live near us."

"Pooh!"

Had it not been for the disdainfulness of this exclamation, Lady Darling would have led out some other "eligible young men" for her husband to consider and reject. But the contemptuous sharpness with which he dismissed the sons of Mr. Bloxham acted like a spur on the plotting mother, and she hastened at once to her scheme for Lottie's settlement.

"I like Mr. Albert Guerdon," the pillowed face said, emphatically.

"So do I," responded the wearer of the crimson dressing-gown. "He has pleasant looks and good manners."

"He is a young man of good principle and high education."

"Has seen a great deal of the world for so young a man."

"He is precisely of the right age—twenty-five."

"Precisely of the right age, and an only child."

"His father is rich."

"As the wife of the first banker in Boringdonshire, Lottie would rank with the ladies of 'the county.'"

"No doubt; and the young man bears an excellent character."

"And she would live so near us that we could almost be called next-door neighbors. Mr. Albert Guerdon told me the other day that by the pathway over the fields it is not more than three miles and a half, or at most four miles, from Arleigh to Earl's Court."

"And Earl's Court is a charming place," observed the owner of the dressing-gown. "I confess, Mary, that you have selected a young man whom I should welcome cordially into the Darling family."

"I am sure he is a very good young man," said the face on the pillow. "No worldly advantages could reconcile me to a match that would link our Lottie to a man unworthy of her."

"To tell you the truth, Mary," said the judge, "this is no new thought to me. A full month since it occurred to me that Mr. Guerdon's son would be a very appropriate match for our child."

"The notion came into my head exactly a month since, as we were driving home from the dinner-party at Newton Court, when we met Mr. Albert Guerdon for the first time."

"Very singular! That was the very time

when the notion first presented itself to my mind."

"I wish you had told me so, James," said the pillowed face, "for then we could have had the pleasure of talking the matter over sooner."

"Well, my dear, we will talk it over fully as soon as I have put the candles out."

In another minute Sir James Darling had extinguished the four tapers with four puffs. Each puff was a dead shot. Each puff killed its candle. As he moved in the darkness toward the pillowed face, he commended the precision of his aims, and the success of the shots.

The clock of Arleigh church had struck one before the conspirator in the yellow turban and the conspirator in the lace-bordered muslin cap fell asleep, after regarding their joint project from every point of view, and agreeing how they would act for its achievement under every imaginable contingency.

And while the two affectionate simpletons talked the matter over, Lottie slept the sleep of innocence and health.

CHAPTER XI.

LADY DARLING PREPARES HER DAUGHTER'S MIND.

LADY DARLING was an habitually late riser. She was no bird whom the early worm had reason to fear. Her ordinary day began full two hours after her husband's breakfast, which was never later than nine o'clock.

Had it not been for Lottie's return from Brighton, Sir James would have breakfasted alone on the day following the conversation reported in the last chapter. But on entering his breakfast parlor, the learned man was greeted with a kiss by the young lady, who looked as fresh as a rose in her morning robe of green and white muslin, and, without asking permission to do so, installed herself as a matter of course in the tea-maker's seat and office. Though she had ascertained from the house-keeper how much tea should be put into the pot, and how long the infusion should be allowed "to stand," Lottie was fearful lest she should not discharge her new functions to her father's satisfaction. But her mind was soon set at ease on this point.

"Capital tea!" the judge exclaimed, emphatically. "Had you a tea-making class at Hanover Square?"

"No," laughed Lottie. "My success is due to anxious conversation with Mrs. Tribe, and servile obedience to her instructions."

"You followed in the steps of an old practitioner, eh? Well, that's what I did with my first brief. By-the-way, I must write to Miss Constantine to-day. Shall I say any thing for you?"

"I send her a kiss."

"Very good; but I can't pass it on till you have given it to me."

"You shall have it before you leave for your court," Miss Lottie answered, demurely, wondering to herself how she could respond in such a free and easy way to her sire.

"I shall tell her that you are a naughty girl."

"And a bad tea-maker?"

"No, for your sake, I won't go into particulars." After a pause, papa added, with a slight return of his pompousness, "I shall express to Miss Constantine my sense of obligation—my *lively* sense of a *heavy* obligation—to her for the care she has expended on your education. Ere long, I hope, she will allow me to express the same feeling by words of mouth. Your mamma will entreat her to visit us."

When Sir James had enjoyed his second cup of "capital tea," he carried Lottie off to the stables, and showed the horse which he had bought for her—a high-bred, dapple-brown animal, with black muzzle, thin nostrils, tiny head, clever ears, arching neck, and a mane and tail fit for a picture. High in the shoulder, deep in the barrel, and standing just fifteen and a half hands, Clifton (so called from the town of its birth) was a model "lady's steed;" and as Lottie saw the gentle creature move round the court-yard of the stables, she had no fear that he would be too much for her. For she had taken regular riding-lessons on the Brighton downs from Mrs. Patterson, the fashionable riding-mistress of the Sussex watering-place, who was so much run after by the fair "visitors" of the town that she would not teach her art to the girls of inferior schools, and affected to attend on the "Constantines" as a matter of favor. And Lottie was a clever and graceful horsewoman.

The delight with which a brave girl accepts her first horse exceeds the delight with which she accepts her first lover. It is quite as vivid as love's first transport, and is alloyed with no undefinable dread that the prize may teach her penitence by giving her an ugly fall. Lottie's pleasure was ecstatic. She patted her horse, coaxed him, kissed him, looked into his eyes, and, stooping, measured the bones of his jet-black fore legs with a small white hand. The number of minute carrots and other sweet bits that she gave him slyly during the next fortnight was prodigious.

It was past eleven o'clock before Lottie saw her mother; and when Lottie Darling gave her the greeting of the day, the girl was sitting on the lawn, beneath the shade of a clump of elms, busy at work at a piece of embroidery. Occupant of a low garden-chair, with the materials for her work before her on a little table, which she had brought from the house, Lottie was a picture of serene gladness. Plying her needle in the open air, she had been thinking how pleasantly time would go with her now that her papa had become so gracious and benignant; and the joy of her heart was visible in a happy face. When her mother, after kissing her and admiring the delicate work on which her fingers were employed, had taken a

seat by her side, the girl felt that nothing could heighten her felicity.

With a husband's readiness to instruct his wife on matters respecting which the stupidest woman is usually qualified to teach the cleverest man, Sir James Darling had closed the curtain talk of the previous night by admonishing his confederate to say nothing to Lottie which should prematurely reveal their design to her. Of course Lady Darling had indignantly assured the judge that there had been no need for the caution. A bird-catcher would as soon think of standing close before the entrance of the net spread for his timid prey as Lady Darling would have thought of telling her girl that she was required to fall in love with a young man whom she had barely seen. The mother required no one to inform her that she would only shock the girl, and cause her to shrink from Albert Guerdon's attentions, were she to give her the slightest hint that her parents wished his arms to embrace her. But though Lady Darling was too wise and womanly to alarm Lottie with unreasonable gossip about Albert, or any other person likely to become her suitor, she deemed it advisable to plant the seeds of romantic thought in her daughter's imagination.

"You were smiling, Lottie, before you heard my step on the grass."

"Very likely I was, mother, but they were unconscious smiles."

"Can't you remember what you were smiling at?"

"My work, perhaps. Flattery usually wins a smile, and a girl can have no more subtle flatterer than a piece of embroidery, which grows more and more lovely under her hands, and whispers to her at every pricking of the needle, 'How clever and skillful you are to make me look so well!' Just look at that sprig, mamma! Is it not well done? Do help my work to flatter me."

"Did the work make any other agreeable speeches to you?"

"No; that's about all that work of this kind can say. But a little praise satisfies the listener who is disposed to be happy. Here comes the warm breeze again, playing over the valley, and bringing us the scent of the Flocktonshire hay fields. Dear mamma, how happy we shall be here—you, and I, and papa!"

"Very happy, as long as you remain with us."

"As long as I remain with you!—I am going to live here forever!"

"I wish you could. But, beauty, I may not allow myself to hope that you will be my daily companion for many years. In all human probability, you'll marry."

Shuddering with surprise and distaste for the thought of marriage as an event that would remove her from Arleigh, Lottie looked curiously into her mother's eyes, which fell before the girl's scrutiny. Then Lottie cooed expostulantly,

"Don't frighten me with dreadful anticipations. You have put a chill into the air. See, I am shivering. If you must talk dolefully, dear, tell me a ghost story, or all the particulars of the last murder."

"If the mere thought of marriage terrifies you, you would do well to train your mind to look forward to it as the happiest condition for a woman."

"But I do not want to be a woman yet. Yesterday I was only a school-girl, and to-day you would make me out to be a woman. May I not have a little time, mamma, between school-girlhood and womanhood in which to be a girl, and nothing else? It will be time enough for me to think of marriage when I shall be a staid woman on the downhill of life—say five-and-twenty years old."

"Ere long you'll be required to think about the matter, my pet, and say 'yea' or 'nay' to some one."

"Why, mamma, you would not have me marry in my teens?" cried Lottie.

"Heaven forbid it!" ejaculated the mother, who, changing her voice after uttering the vehement exclamation, continued, in a lower tone, "But I ought not to say that. Your wedding day, whenever it may be, will be a sad one for me; but I would not defer it from the selfish consideration that it will be painful for me to part with you. While I tell you to look at marriage as your probable field of duty, I am, as you see, schooling myself to anticipate cheerfully the time when you will leave *your* mother at duty's call, just as I left *mine*. I feel toward you and your career, Lottie, much as a proud father feels toward a son who has entered the queen's army. However much the father would like the boy to be always near him, he knows that a soldier may not shirk foreign service or the battle-field. You may laugh at the unaptness of the simile, but marriage is a kind of battle-field—it is the field where women win their brightest victories and shine heroically, or with honorable, though perhaps unapplauded, dutifulness, discharge the highest duties of their sex."

Lottie sighed. The topic pained her so much that she fell back on her old phrase, saying, "Well, mamma, 'let it be.' I'll think of it when I must. And I hope I shall do my duty in the battle-field, whenever I am required to enter it. But we'll 'let it be' for the present." But though she wished to dismiss the subject abruptly, the gentle sadness and pensive affectionateness of her mother's face constrained her to add, "If I must marry, I do pray Heaven that my home may be near Arleigh. Dearest, I could not be happy under any roof that was far from you and papa."

"May your prayer be granted!" Lady Darling responded. After a pause, she added with earnestness, which greatly impressed her hearer, "Till I see you married near my own door, I shall never cease to dread that marriage may take you far away from me. I am nervous,

and a wretchedly bad sleeper, and in my restless nights this dread sometimes tortures me. It would add years of happiness to my days to see you happily married under circumstances that would enable me to laugh at my old fear. But it must be as God wills it. And, as you say, for the present we will 'let it be.'"

Seeing that she had said enough for that morning on a delicate topic, Lady Darling remembered that she had some letters to write, and returned to the house, leaving Lottie under the elms, musing over the two thoughts which had been planted in her mind—the thought that marriage was her destiny, and that her mother wished, above all things, that the scene of her wedded life should be in the neighborhood of Arleigh.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST IN THE FIELD.

LOTTIE DARLING had put an end to the talk about marriage, but she could not dismiss the displeasing subject from her mind, in whose fertile soil two novel thoughts had been placed by a skillful gardener. For more than half an hour she gave less heed to the work, on which she continued to ply her fine needle, than to the prospect of a dutiful life which her mother had exhibited to her. During the first five minutes of that time her meditations were despondent. She wished that her mamma had not touched on the disturbing and gloomy topic; but the soothing and exhilarating influences of the scene, the brightness of the valley, the verdure of the lawn, the misty blueness of the sky, and the music of the balmy breeze passing gently through the rustling leaves over her head, soon put her melancholy to flight, and inspired her to deal banteringly with the imaginations which had for a brief while disposed her to be tearful.

In this happier mood, Lottie sang, in a voice scarcely audible at a distance of ten paces from her,

"And there came a gallant knight,
With his hauberk shining bright,
And his heart was beating light
Free and gay.
As I lay a-thinking,
He rode upon his way."

"Where do those lines come from?" she asked herself, when she had chanted the words in a silvery under-tone. "They must be part of a poem that I have read. It is impossible that I have composed them, for they are clever poetry, and I am a dull-witted young person. But I can't recollect any thing that went before or after them.

'As I lay a-thinking,
He rode upon his way.'

Ah! she (*I must have been a girl*) lay a-thinking, when the gallant knight had passed on. She did not accompany him. He rode on his way alone. That shall be my case too. His

hauberk may shine ever so brightly, but I won't mount 'Clifton,' and ride with any knight in a sleeveless steel jacket who asks me to come with him, unless he is a wonderfully virtuous knight, and lives in Boringdonshire, and promises to love mamma as much as he loves me."

Scarcely had she delivered herself of this egotistical comment on a random reading from one of the Ingoldsby Legends, when she heard steps, the rustling of a dress, and voices behind her. Looking in the direction of the sounds, she saw her mamma approaching her, and attended by Mr. Albert Guerdon, who had come over from Earl's Court on foot with a sedge basket in his hand. Lady Darling delighted in ferns, and had conceived a desire to make her fernery the best in the neighborhood. Albert was no fern fancier, though he had a proper admiration for the loveliest of all nature's smaller growths, from the wild bracken of the wood and heath to the drooping hart's-tongue and the delicate maiden's-hair. But though he had never examined a flourish of the different species of the fern that flourish on English soil, and could not give the botanical names of any twelve of them, he wished to ingratiate himself with the mistress of Arleigh Manor by displaying an interest in her horticultural pursuit. With this object in view, the young man had, during the previous ten days, ridden over to Riverdale, and Castle Coosic, and Marlow Court, and, by means of munificent fees to the gardeners-in-chief of those principal "places" of the south-west corner of Boringdonshire, had gathered such a contribution to Lady Darling's fernery as caused her eyes to sparkle with unusual animation, and made her thank the giver with cordial fervor. Albert was delighted with the lady's acceptance of the sedge basket, and his exertions in her service were rewarded still more agreeably with an immediate introduction to Lottie.

For Mr. Albert Guerdon had no intention to profit by his father's caution, and to avoid Arleigh because Lottie Darling was lovely without being rich, while Blanche Heathcote was an heiress, with £60,000 in the Funds, a fat farm, and an iron field of incalculable value. So excellent a young man had, of course, no disposition to think lightly of the fifth commandment as an antiquated precept that had been good for the human race in its infancy, but was inapplicable to the wisdom and strength of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, he meant to comply with the spirit of the injunction. He would render homage to his sire's virtues, and recognize his title to filial gratitude and reverence. He would also be a strictly obedient son in all matters that appeared to him to lie within the limits of paternal authority. But Albert held a clear and firm opinion that his choice of a wife, so long as he selected a girl of suitable condition and character, was a matter lying outside those limits. According to the young man's moral code, and way of reading the fifth commandment, the father who ven-

tured to constrain a son's affections in matrimonial affairs was at best nothing more than an officious counselor, whose wishes were devoid of divine sanction.

He had returned from his educational course to Hammerhampton with a resolve to marry some one—to marry no one whom he did not love with all the force of his ardent nature, and to regard his selection of a bride as an affair on which his slightly imperious father would have no right to dictate to him.

He had walked over from Earl's Court to Arleigh, rejoicing in his newly formed purpose to marry Lottie Darling. Though not deficient in modesty, he did not, after the fashion of some youngsters (remarkable, by-the-way, chiefly for their impudence), qualify the statement of his purpose with any reference to contingencies and painful possibilities. He rejected such forms as "I will marry her *if* she will have me;" or, "I'll try to win her love *if* her father and mother will let me;" or, "*If* she won't have me, I will marry no one else." Speaking to himself of himself, he put his intentions respecting Lottie in the most peremptory and incisive terms. "She *shall* be my wife; she *shall* love me, even though she may not love me at first sight." "I will marry her before she is twenty-one." These were some of the speeches which the young man had uttered to himself while strolling over the pleasant fields with a propitiatory offering for Lottie's mamma in his hand. For Albert had fallen in love with Lottie at first sight. Ay, more, he had given her his heart ere he had even seen her. The young man had fallen in love with her portrait.

The portrait was the cleverly executed sketch in crayons which Lady Darling had shown him, in the simplest manner imaginable, on the occasion of his first visit to Arleigh Manor. Mary Darling did far more than she imagined by the timely and artful display of that picture. Albert had been dining with Sir James and three other gentlemen, and he was in the drawing-room after dinner, chatting with his agreeable hostess, when, to illustrate a question that had arisen in their talk about the scenery of the Welsh hills, she opened a folio of unbound etchings and water-color sketches that lay on the table. Having examined the picture to which his attention was specially called, Albert turned over the collection of works, and in due course came on the portrait, which in a moment brought color to his face and brightness to his eyes.

"That is lovely!" he exclaimed.

Smiling at the extravagant praise of what she affected for the moment to regard as a trivial and unsuccessful performance, Lady Darling observed,

"It is the picture of my little girl, who is still at school; but it does not do her justice."

Having taken the sketch from Albert's hand, Lady Darling glanced at it with apparent carelessness, and in a few seconds put it blank side upward, on the collection of drawings, which Albert had already examined.

"Yes," the mother remarked, with an assumption of disappointment, "Mr. Neelson is usually more successful. It does not do my little girl justice."

Having turned over the other contents of the folio, Albert put the book from him ostentatiously, and, crossing the room, exchanged a few words with Sir James Darling. But it did not escape the mother's warily observant eyes that, after the lapse of twenty minutes, the young man returned to the folio, and opened it at the place where she had put the girl's likeness.

A thing of art, as well as a truthful portraiture, the drawing was studied by a man of artistic susceptibility. It caught his fancy and stirred his heart. Touched even more sensibly by what the subtle limner had indicated than by what he had fully expressed, Albert Guerdon gained from the sketch a new ideal of girlish delicacy and winningness; and from that evening till the moment when he saw Lottie at the Owlebury railway station he had, in his wakeful hours, almost incessantly contemplated, with agitations of vivid surprise and romantic delight, the radiant face and matchless shape of the creature who had been thus made to live in the imagination which she fascinated. Had Lottie's actual appearance disappointed the hopes which her portrait had called into existence it is probably that Albert would not have rendered justice to her attractiveness. Riding homeward with his father, he would, perhaps, have mentally laughed at the illusion of his fancy, and at his folly in surrendering himself so completely to the trick of a lying pencil. Had she failed to realize his anticipations, he would probably have so completely dismissed her from his sentimental life that Lady Darling would have labored in vain to win him for a son-in-law. But it happened that Lottie fulfilled with wonderful exactness the expectations roused by Mr. Neelson's suggestive treatment of her beauty.

When his eye saw her, Albert's fancy was satisfied. As she sprang forward to her mother, with an ineffable light of gladness in her countenance, and a passion of purest love visible in her writhing lips and tearful eyes, he transferred his homage from a creature of fancy to the girl of flesh and blood, of gentle mien and musical intonations, who stood before him, overflowing with sensibility and affectionateness. As he regarded her, his heart said "She is mine!" The spectacle of her return to her mother's arms made him incapable of desiring any other woman. Had Blanche Heathcote possessed ten iron farms, and ten times £60,000 in the Consols, her wealth and heart would have been mere dust in the balance against the charms of his "chosen one."

Of course he would have felt and acted more conventionally, and to the taste of consistent admirers of the commonplace, had he deemed himself altogether unworthy of her, and so, undervaluing himself, had trembled under her gaze, and accused himself of inordinate presumption in daring to desire her. Some read-

ers of this page are doubtless hoping that he may be reprov'd for his overweening confidence by a resolute rejection of his suit. But they may not accuse him of masculine insolence and self-sufficiency of the common kind. His confidence was quite innocent of those offensive qualities. It was the offspring of self-respect and a quiet conscience. Abounding in respectfulness for all persons, Albert, after the wont of men who honor their neighbors, was not deficient in respect for himself. Moreover, one of the felicitous results of the natural wholesomeness of his life was the assurance that his history comprised nothing that would cause a sensitive girl to shrink from him. Your over-diffident suitor, who exalts his mistress into a goddess, and scorns himself for being a soulless, sensual ruffian, is often much nearer the truth in the latter than in the former judgment. He apprehends failure, because he knows himself to be unworthy of success. He fears refusal, because his conscience tells him that no gentleman of refinement and religious training would hesitate to reject him if she could penetrate his disguises, and see his real character.

Without self-righteousness, or priggish impudence, or any lack of genuine modesty, Albert Guerdon could aver that his love was an offering meet for her whom he desired. In feeling this, he rated himself highly, and knew that he did so; for he had no disposition to undervalue the prize which he meant to win. It is not in the power of a libertine, with youth slipping through his trembling fingers, to imagine the joyful fervor with which this young man, who had never sown his wild oats, magnified the graces and virtues of his heroine. She was his deity, and he would worship her. This knowledge was a spring of gladness to him; but its fullest joy was felt only when he reflected that she would repay his service with a corresponding devotion. The same Hand that had fashioned her had made him; and if she was a perfect type of virginal purity, he was no tarnished image of the Creator. Why, then, should he fear to claim her?

On introducing Albert Guerdon to her daughter, Lady Darling explained to her that Mr. Guerdon had brought a collection of ferns, which he had gathered with much trouble from several quarters for the new fernery. Lottie was also informed that Mr. Guerdon had walked over from Earl's Court, and would stop to luncheon.

Miss Darling received the visitor most graciously—not indeed with a Hanover Square courtesy, but with a slight inclination of her figure, that was more appropriate to the occasion, and no less graceful than the solemn reverence. To indicate also that she received him as a recognized "friend of the house," she put forth her right hand cordially, and allowed him to press it.

"I trust my horse did not frighten you yesterday, Miss Darling?" said Albert, when he had touched the proffered hand.

"It startled me for a moment—but only for a moment."

"When you saw that there was neither malice nor mischief in his capers."

"He looked splendidly as he rose and caracol'd by the side of the carriage."

"When I return to Earl's Court, I will tell him that you admire him. He will be prouder than ever."

"I must show you *my* horse—a new acquisition."

"I congratulate you on gaining it."

"It is my *first* horse. Papa gave him to me this morning, and I shall mount him this afternoon, for a canter over Stroud Common, and a walk in the shady lanes."

"You are a good horsewoman?"

"Pretty well. I rode twice a week at Brighton."

"With companions?"

"With such a brave troop of girls! Sometimes we were out in full force on the Downs, with all Mrs. Patterson's twenty horses."

"You won't have so many companions here."

"No. But there are several riding-girls in this neighborhood. Christina Marsh will be glad to ride with me. Do you know her?"

"I met her at Mrs. Monkton's three days since at a dinner-party, and had the pleasure of taking her in to dinner."

"She is very amusing."

"Is she?"

"She is a sprightly and brilliant talker."

"Certainly dullness is not her fault."

Had Lottie cared much to know whether Albert Guerdon liked Christina (commonly called Tiny) Marsh, she would not have failed to notice that the tone of his replies to her commendations of Christina implied that the "fastest" young lady of the neighborhood was not altogether to his taste. But the significant tone was lost on Lottie, who forthwith proposed that her mamma and Mr. Guerdon should accompany her to the stables, for a critical examination of "Clifton." There would be time for the visit to the dappled-brown steed before luncheon.

On their way round the house to the stables, Lottie took occasion to glance shyly at Albert, while his attention was withdrawn from her and fixed on Lady Darling.

She saw that he was decidedly handsome, had dark, thoughtful eyes, which now and then brightened merrily, and had a pair of dark arching eyebrows, that were separated from his long lashes by long, almond-shaped lids, that rose and fell with a peculiar slowness and composure. She observed that his nose, unlike his father's aquiline feature, was straight and finely shaped, and that his high forehead rose perpendicularly from the lower frontal line, and stood out boldly to the right and left. It did not escape her that his dark hair was rich, silken, and curly, and that a line of its bright, short curls overshadowed the broad forehead with waves of shadow. He was not less than five feet ten inches

high, and his figure, remarkable rather for its elegance than its sufficient evidence of strength, was expressive of dignity. Even if she had not been an habitual scrutinizer of faces, Lottie would not have failed to remark the delicacy and brightness of his well-kept mustache and beard, and of his ample, though by no means bushy, whiskers. It was equally apparent to the young lady, though less obvious to his ordinary and comparatively unobservant acquaintances, that the least comely parts of his countenance were those which reminded beholders of his father's prominent cheek-bones. At these points Mr. Albert's face was too broad and prominent. Had he been a stout man, the upper curves of his cheeks would have been puffy as well as prominent. But the young man, at the opening of his twenty-sixth year, was in excellent condition, and he has not to this day qualified himself to rank with "the heavy-weights."

"Clifton" was critically inspected by the ladies and their friend. The groom in attendance brought the animal out of the stable, and led him round the court. Having eyed the horse's points, touched his legs and fetlocks, examined his teeth, and done every thing else which the occasion required of a critic, Albert delivered a highly favorable verdict on Lottie's acquisition. The saddle and bridle were also exhibited to the visitor, and received his approval.

"And where is the new whip?" Albert inquired, as he left the harness-room.

"My old whip, that I have used at Brighton, is lying on my riding-habit. It is a neat little whip, and will do well enough," Lottie replied, in a tone which implied that the instrument of correction, though good enough, was inferior to the rest of her riding equipment.

"I suppose you don't wear a spur?"

"Dear me, no," Lottie responded, quickly, shuddering at the thought of what she deemed a barbarous instrument—at least for a girl's heel.

At the garden gate, where Lady Darling preceded her companions by a few paces, Albert Guerdon, looking at Lottie with matter-of-fact seriousness, observed,

"If your brothers were at Arleigh, Miss Darling, I should ask you to allow me to join them and you in your riding excursions."

"How very nice that would be! How I wish they were here! They will come to Arleigh in October," returned the girl, her face lighting up at the mention of her brothers' intended visit.

"And, as it is," Albert continued, deferentially, "I hope that the time is not far distant when, without getting a snub for my impudence, I may offer to attend you as your mounted cavalier."

Lottie smiled as she replied,

"We must hear what mamma says to that proposal."

"Of course—of course!" the young man said, quickly.

Without another word, Lottie walked onward to the house. She felt that her countenance had for the moment assumed a color scarcely to be accounted for by Albert's words. Of course it would not do that Miss Darling, of Arleigh Manor, should be riding about the country with a young man, who was neither her brother nor her cousin, but only a "quite new acquaintance." Mr. Albert Guerdon, however, had taken no liberty; Lottie was just to him in this respect. He had only hinted at what might happen in the future, when he had been so fortunate as to win her good opinion.

Luncheon over, Mr. Albert Guerdon took his departure, saying good-bye to Lottie in the hall of the manor-house, and finding an opportunity in his retreat to speak a few words to Lady Darling, who put her parasol over her head, and graciously attended her departing guest to the first gate.

Late in the evening of the following day, there was brought to Arleigh Manor by special messenger a note and an extremely attenuated package, both of which were addressed to Miss Charlotte Constance Darling.

"What on earth can that long tapering package be?" inquired Judge Darling, who knew well enough the contents of the white tissue-paper. "And who is likely to send you a note?"

Lady Darling regarded her girl intently, as she opened the note, and glanced at its contents. Astonishment was the prevailing expression of the girl's perplexed, and blushing, and slightly pleased face as she perused the letter, which she immediately exhibited to her parents.

"How extraordinary of him!" ejaculated the young lady, who added, by way of showing that she did not accuse her correspondent of extraordinary presumption, "But it is very kind of him."

On receiving the opened letter from Lottie, Sir James Darling read aloud,

"MY DEAR MISS DARLING,—Pardon the darling which enables me to entreat you to accept a trifling addition to your riding equipment, which I should not have ventured to offer you, had I not obtained your mamma's permission to do so. Believe me to be, yours very sincerely and respectfully, ALBERT GUERDON."

"Upon my word, a very deferential and gentleman-like, and altogether appropriate letter," observed the reader, holding up the note for Mary Darling's inspection. "Nothing could be in better taste. He intimates very frankly that he relies, Lottie, on your kindness not to regard his attentions as a scarcely warrantable freedom, and then justifies himself modestly by pleading mamma's sanction."

"Mr. Albert Guerdon," Lady Darling remarked, enthusiastically, "could not do any thing that would be in bad taste. He is a gentleman, and a most agreeable young gentleman."

"But let us look at the 'trifling addition,'" Sir James cried, with animation.

Whereupon Lottie's trembling fingers broke the seals affixed to the tissue-paper, and snapped some encircling threads. In a trice she held in her hand the daintiest of little riding-whips. The tiny switch of whalebone and white silk had a handle of smooth white ivory, that was surmounted by a golden knob, and was separated from the lower part of the whip by another knot of the precious metal. On the white handle were tricked in scarlet the judge's shield and crest. "*Dulce decus meum*," the motto of the arms, was also bitten into the ivory in scarlet lettering. Sir James, who, like most Englishmen of gentle but not highly patrician descent, prided himself vastly on his family, was delighted with Albert Guerdon's graceful reference to the quality of the Darlings.

"Then, of course, I may accept the present, and thank him for his kindness?" Lottie observed.

"Why on earth, my dear child," exclaimed her father, "should you hesitate to do so?"

"I am in your hands, papa," rejoined Miss Darling, with delicious sedateness; "but I thought that a young lady should not receive presents from any gentleman who is neither her near relation nor her accepted suitor."

"She should not receive them, my dear," responded the judge, stating the exact law of the case, "without her parents' knowledge and approval."

"To be sure," assented Lottie, with docility, and an air of gratitude for full light on a serious question, "that is the rule." Suddenly adopting a lighter and almost hilarious tone, she glanced joyously at the by no means formidable contrivance for torture, and exclaimed, "It is a beauty!—a perfect lady's whip!—and the nob is so nice to put against one's lips! I shall always be kissing it." The young lady was not aware that Albert had already put a kiss on the golden device, saying, as he did so, "I will kiss it, for it will often touch her lips."

Her excitement subsiding quickly, Lottie said, with amazing coolness,

"Well, as I ought to send Mr. Guerdon a line of thanks, I will write the note at once, and then it will be off my mind."

And, even as she spoke the words, Lottie seated herself at her mother's Davenport, and dashed off this brief missive:

"DEAR MR. GUERDON,—Papa and mamma are delighted with the very pretty whip that you have been good enough to give me, and I am no less pleased with it. Accept my cordial thanks for your present, and believe me, dear Mr. Guerdon, to be yours, very sincerely,

"LOTTIE DARLING."

For an instant she debated whether she should sign herself in full, Charlotte Constance Darling, but she felt that her stater's signature would be formal and frigid. She was "Lottie Dar-

ling" and nothing else to her friends, and Mr. Albert Guerdon was one of her very good friends. So she finished off, with her usual signature, the first letter that she had ever penned to any man-creature, with the exception of her papa, uncle, and brothers.

"There, mamma, I suppose that will do," she observed, handing the note to Lady Darling, and then proceeding to direct an envelope to Albert Guerdon, Esq., of Earl's Court.

An hour or so later, on retiring for the night, Lottie carried her whip up stairs, and placed it in a certain wardrobe of her private room, under the folds of her dark-blue cloth riding-habit.

"It is a beauty!" she remarked aloud to herself, taking the toy switch from the place of concealment where she had put it a moment before, and drawing its smooth white handle over her lips. Albert would have exulted had he seen the tenderness of the endearment thus lavished on a lifeless object. But he would not have cared to know how little she thought of him. In her delight at the gift, she had almost quite forgotten the giver.

Having restored the whip to its appointed resting-place, and closed the doors of her wardrobe, Lottie destroyed Albert's letter, tearing it into small pieces, and putting them into her litter-basket. Lottie was of opinion that people were unwise to keep letters, unless they were epistles of importance, and were the writing of very particular personages—such, for instance, as her papa and mamma.

When it came into his possession on the following day, Albert Guerdon treated her brief note in a very different fashion. The happy fellow reperused it at least a hundred times before he went to bed, and at each reading he gave the sacred paper a score of kisses.

CHAPTER XIII.

TINY MARSH'S "THEORY OF LIFE."

THOUGH he was rich in expedients, and would have scorned to play too often on the same string, Albert Guerdon made Lady Darling's fernery a pretext for a second visit to Arleigh Manor. Having planted the new ferns, it was only natural that he should wish to see how they fared in their new quarters. His anxiety for them was all the more reasonable, as, on the occasion of his visit to Hampton to buy Lottie's whip, he encountered the Earl of Slumberbridge's gardener-in-chief, and learned from him that, as an inexperienced cultivator of ferns, Lady Darling was likely to fall into the common mistake of keeping her favorite plants in too high a temperature. The overt purpose of his third call at the manor-house was to bring Lady Darling a number of *Fraser's Magazine*, which contained an article that she was especially desirous to see. And as the lady, on receiving "the *Fraser*," desired

to know what could be urged against the article of interest, Albert naturally offered to procure for her the current number of *Blackwood*, in which the topic of the article was considered from another point of view.

On the day following Albert's third call at Arleigh, Lottie mounted "Clifton," for a ride to Drayton-Combermere, to call on her friend Tiny Marsh, niece of Sir Frederick Marsh, Bart., rector of that wide parish. The representative of an old and impoverished Boringdonshire family, Sir Frederick would have been a needy man, had it not been for his lucrative living; but the fine preferment enabled him to live with dignity in the best society of his district. A gentleman in ecclesiastical orders, rather than a parish priest, the baronet followed Lord Slumberbridge's hounds twice a week during the hunting season, bestirred himself in politics on the Conservative side, and lived with a profuseness that made prudent folk wonder what would become of the little heir to the baronetcy, should untoward events exclude him from the succession to his father's rectory. Sir Frederick had married twice, and enriched society with two families of children. His first lot of girls the baronet had placed out fairly well in matrimony; but it was improbable that he would live to see his second group of children float out on life. The eldest girl of this younger family was only in her twelfth year; and the one boy of the party (the heir to the baronetcy) was scarcely four years of age. As for Christina—the orphan child of a fast cavalry officer, who had left her without a penny to his elder brother's care—she was a young lady of undefinable status. Her uncle had been very good to her, and she was a sparkling fact of his social "set;" but she was not a daughter of the rectory, and needed no one to remind her of the insecurity of her position. In case her uncle should die before her settlement in marriage, she might be compelled to earn her bread as a governess or a rich gentlewoman's companion. In the mean time, she was Miss Tiny Marsh of Drayton-Combermere, *etat*. 22, charming at archery parties, brilliant at balls, and relying on her own abilities, rather than on her aunt's assistance, for the attainment of matrimonial honors. Miss Marsh always had partners in a ball-room, and the young men of "society" in the south-west corner of Boringdonshire extolled her for being "capital fun;" but hitherto her perfect waltzing and smart tongue had not won her an offer that she cared to accept.

Followed by Benjamin, the judge's coachman, who had donned a short-coat and looked very much like a groom, Lottie was on her way to Drayton-Combermere, when, just as she was turning at foot-pace off Broomsgrove Heath, a black horse leaped the high fence which skirted the common. The rain of the previous night had softened the ground, so that Albert could canter over half a dozen paddocks, and take as many leaps in his way, without subjecting

"Emperor" to any serious risks. It seemed to Lottie that she might not pass a day without encountering the gentleman. Not that she was sorry to see him, or wished to avoid him. On the contrary, if he would give her no more than half a dozen words of greeting, the meeting would be agreeable enough. But she would not allow him to accompany her for so much as a hundred paces. Her apprehension that he might try to fasten himself on her was groundless. Albert was not the man to take a lady at a disadvantage. And of all women, Lottie was the last on whom he would have liked to intrude, to her embarrassment. It was enough for him to raise his hat and give her a grand bow as he trotted past her, at a distance which made it easy for her to invite him to join her, if she wished him to do so. On the other hand, it was enough for Lottie to repay his greeting with a smile, and a scarcely perceptible elevation of the ivory handle of his present, as she went onward to Drayton-Combermere. The young people had been pleasantly reminded of each other.

"That's fortunate!" Albert said to himself, as he rode on his way. "She will think about me for a minute or two. Any how, she has seen that I am still in the land of the living. If it had been Miss Tiny Marsh (as they call her), she would have hailed me at the top of her voice, and invited me to a galloping flirtation."

Lottie had not covered more than another mile of the way to Sir Frederick Marsh's rectory, when at a turning of the road she encountered another equestrian, who came upon her at a rapid trot, and, recognizing her at once, exclaimed,

"Oh, Lottie, well met, my dear! I am man-hunting, and perhaps you have caught sight of him."

The speaker of these words was mounted on a long-legged chestnut blood screw, with a wild eye and four white stockings. It was Tiny Marsh, riantly mischievous and dazzlingly pretty, as she made her fretful steed stamp the ground viciously under the irritating pressure of the curb. Younger in appearance than her age, Sir Frederick's niece had a wealth of glossy hair that was a compromise between light brown and golden, and a face whose features were singularly expressive of cleverness and vivacity. Her gray eyes were defective in color, but they overflowed with animation; her lips were small and enticing, her complexion bright and sanguine without being ruddy. Her smile was ravishing; and when she laughed, she displayed a set of excellently white and regular teeth. But her strongest point was her figure. Small in the waist, she had a shape whose configurations were seen to advantage under the restraint of a tightly fitting riding-habit.

"Are you looking for your uncle?" Lottie inquired, with a simplicity which made her friend break into a peal of rippling laughter.

"No, no, child. I don't hunt about the country for my uncle," answered the chestnut's diminutive rider, shaking with glee in her dark-green riding-habit, and laughing again so that the green plume danced over her hat like a living thing.

"They told me half an hour since at Farncombe Court that Mr. Albert Guerdon had left them, to ride homeward by Boxmore and Brooms Grove Heath. So I slipped away in pursuit. But I am afraid he has escaped me. I ought to have fallen in with him at the Trav-erse."

Lottie was astounded; but she answered with composure,

"You won't overtake him now, for he passed me nearly a quarter of an hour since on Brooms Grove Heath, and by this time he is within two miles of Earl's Court."

"You headed him, of course?"

"I can't imagine what you mean, Christina?"

"You did not allow him to pass you without speaking to him?"

"Indeed I did. I had nothing to say to him."

"You sweet little simpleton! How long have you been back from Brighton?"

"Only ten days or so."

"Ah, that accounts for it. You are still only a school-girl, and are behindhand in the gossip of the neighborhood. Why, my pet, you have thrown away the chance for which I have ridden in vain four miles. Mr. Guerdon is our new 'catch.' All the girls are mad about him. He is the only son of Mr. Guerdon of Earl's Court, and he is quite as handsome as his father is rich."

"Allow me, my dear," Lottie cooed mischievously, "to condole with you on your disappointment."

"Well, since I have missed him, Lottie, I'll go with you. Let us turn our horses' heads, and ride round by Sir Andrew Carrick's, and see how they are getting on with the new buildings at Countess Court. As I can't have my gallant knight, I will console myself with a guileless maiden. By-the-way, you are amazingly pretty. You have come on wonderfully since Christmas."

"So mamma tells me."

"And your looking-glass. How long have you had that horse?"

"Papa gave him to me on the day after my return from Hanover Square."

"How delighted you must be to have done with Hanover Square, and black marks, and thick bread-and-butter!"

"I was very happy at school," returned the loyal "old Constantine."

"You'll be happier now, for your papa and mamma have been accepted by 'the neighborhood,' and every one in 'the set' likes them prodigiously. You will have more invitations than you'll be able to accept. And I am sure Sir James will give you a good allowance.

He may be a trifle too stiff, but I am sure he is not at all stingy."

Whereto Lottie responded with much stateliness, and not a little of her sire's stiffness,

"Papa is very fortunate, Miss Marsh, to have your good opinion."

"Very well answered. And now that you have snubbed Miss Marsh for sauciness, forgive her, and call her Tiny."

"Last Christmas I used to call you Christina."

"Of course you did, for then you were only a school-girl; but now we are equals. I hope that we shall never be rivals, for you would be a dangerous rival. Myself excepted, Lottie, you are by far the prettiest girl in this corner of the county."

"I am glad you made that exception, for it is not in my modesty to like to hear myself rated too highly."

"Here we are at the corner of Mr. Campion's wood—Mr. Campion of Pool Hill. You know the place?"

"No; I have never seen it."

"Then let us dismount. I will lead you down a foot-path that will take us to the Lake Head, where we can get a charming view of the water and park, and the house at the farther end of the lake. Shall we leave our horses?"

"By all means."

In a trice Tiny Marsh had slipped from her saddle, and whistled up her groom with a small silver whistle which she took from the pocket of her riding-habit.

Having consigned their steeds to their servants, at the crown of the steep hill, the girls gathered up their long skirts, and walked down the road for twenty yards to a stile that afforded foot passengers an ingress to Mr. Campion's wood. Christina led the way, and as she climbed the stile, with a momentary display of a pair of trimly-booted feet, the spur on her left heel was visible to Lottie, who exclaimed, reproachfully,

"Are you so cruel, Tiny, as to wear a spur?"

Tiny laughed.

"Ay, and to use it too, as my peevish animal would tell you, if he could speak."

"The spur is a barbarous thing," Lottie remarked, with firmness, but in no degree pugnaciously. "No girl should use one."

"No girl should use it immoderately. One can have a cruel contrivance to assist one in moments of difficulty, without caring to use it cruelly. You might as well tell me to cut out my tongue because it can give pain, as to forbid me to wear a spur because it can punish a washish brute."

"If I caught you wounding people with your tongue, perhaps I should wish you to cut it out, or at least clip off its tip."

These words were exchanged as the companions descended the steep and narrow foot-way that in two minutes brought them out of the wood on a piece of carefully kept lawn at

the head of the lake. The verdure of the undulating grass-plot was brightened with flowers, and in the middle of the small garden stood the large and rather cockneyfied summer-house, which the people of the neighborhood were permitted, on certain conditions, to use for picnic luncheons. Fortunately there was on the present occasion no "party" of excursionists at the Lake Head, and the young ladies had the green-painted arbor to themselves. Christina Marsh took possession of a high and roomy chair; while Lottie, who had a taste for lowly places and attitudes, seated herself on a four-legged stool at her friend's feet.

"I have conceived a liking for you, Lottie," Tiny observed, in a tone of comical and inoffensive patronage, when she had allowed Lottie a minute or two for silent admiration of the scenery, the curving surfaces of the over-timbered park, and the spectacle of Mr. Campion's turreted mansion, which was visible in the distance between the two islets, raised in the lake for benefit of the water-fowl. "We shall be good friends, and play the game of life with mutual confidence, and proper regard for one another's 'hands.' We won't flatter each other stupendously; and neither of us shall be offended at free speech from the other. I took your scolding very good-naturedly just now, when you called me cruel for wearing a little steel ornament in my heel. When I scold you, you must imitate my amiability."

"And also your readiness to amend the error of your ways?" Lottie suggested.

"Oh! I sha'n't discard my spur. No one ever takes good, wholesome advice. By acting on your counsel, I should show my disesteem for it, for, like the rest of the world, I never do the right thing at another person's dictation."

"You won't pledge yourself to profit by my censure, but you promise never to be offended at it?"

"That's just it."

"Then I'll put your promise to the test at once."

"Go on. What is amiss? Is my hat too high, or my feather on the wrong side?"

Taking courage to play the censor, Lottie inquired, in her most persuasive and irresistibly gentle style,

"Is it well for a girl, Tiny, to ride in a harum-scarum way about the world after the marriageable gentlemen of her acquaintance? Is it a good and advisable course for a girl?"

"It depends on whether she has a horse that's up to its work, a figure that looks to advantage in the saddle, and a complexion that does not turn scarlet when she takes violent exercise," Tiny returned, with imperturbable effrontery and good humor.

"Does she do well to proclaim herself a man-hunter?"

"On the contrary, very ill, if she makes the confession to any person on whose discretion and fidelity she can not rely. But toward the friends whom she can trust, a girl does well to

be frank, and to show herself in her true colors."

"You won't see my meaning," returned Lottie, cooing more and more gently, as she pushed her reproof more closely home. "I will be more explicit. Does a girl do well to be a man-hunter at all? I have always supposed that a girl, instead of seeking admirers, should be sought; that she should live content with maidenly happiness until a suitor has approached with delicate homage and fit entreaties?"

"My dear child, your innocence is delightful; it is positively refreshing. Is it possible that you have left school for ten whole days, and still hold such charmingly antiquated notions? You are a relic of the feudal ages. But pray, for Heaven's sake, disabuse your mind as quickly as possible of such ridiculous notions."

"Are they indeed so ridiculous?"

"As much out of fashion, my dear, as the farthingale or the Elizabethan ruff. You are a damsel of the true feudal type, and would have been an exemplary young person in the days before the Reformation, when girls were bought and sold in the matrimonial market like cattle, and when a young woman was held to break the fifth commandment if she declined to wed a gouty old man at her father's bidding."

"Do be serious for a moment, Tiny."

"Your father, sitting in one of his courts, could not be more serious than I am, Lottie. Your views are altogether unsuited to the nineteenth century. They belong to the period of pack-horses and pilgrimages, not to the age of steam and the electric telegraph. They are preposterous in this epoch of woman's freedom. Women began to take the initiative in their affairs of sentiment shortly after the fall of the Stuarts; and at the present day any man who imagines that he may choose a wife for himself is a masculine eccentricity, and a flagrant repudiator of the rights of our sex. Are you wanting in womanly spirit?"

"I am afraid I must be," said Lottie, with an affectation of shame for herself.

"No, you are not," Miss Marsh returned, encouragingly. "You only need to be enlightened, and to embrace the new 'theory of life!'"

"What a grand phrase, Tiny! 'The new theory of life!'"

"It is more than a phrase, it is a grand fact! And I will expound it to you. We women are hunters—man is our prey. When she has captured the prize on which she has set her affections, a woman of high principle ceases to be a hunter, and, leaving the sport to the unmarried women, reposes on her matronly dignity, and superintends the industry of her white slave."

"Her white slave!" Lottie ejaculated, with surprise.

"Precisely so. Every husband is the slave of the woman who owns him. *He* toils—*she* receives the fruits of his industry, and spends them. When he is indolent, she whips him with her tongue; when he works sedulously,

and to good purpose, she rewards him with praise. In the more fortunate ranks of life the slave frequently leads an idle life, because he has inherited an estate from his father. In that case his estate passes by marriage to his captor; and she enjoys it—with a grateful consideration for the creature who brought it into her possession. In any case, the owner of a white slave, if she is sagacious, and worthy of her position, takes a good deal of pains to make him contented with his lot; and usually the white slave is a happy creature. Sometimes he is treated so leniently and artfully that he imagines himself to be the master of his fair proprietor."

Scandalized though she was at her companion's shameless flippancy, Lottie could not refrain from laughing at it.

Tiny continued her exposition with the gravity of a scientific lecturer. She entered into the details of her theory of life, and exhibited the advantages of the new relation of the sexes.

"This white slavery," she concluded, "is the 'peculiar institution' of England in the nineteenth century. At present I am a man-hunter. Wait a year or two, and you'll see me the proprietor of a handsome, docile, charming white slave, who will imagine, perhaps, that I am his obsequious creature, while I shall govern him completely. In the mean time, don't be shocked if Tiny hunts more boldly and lawlessly than girls who have mammas to aid them in the sport. Tiny Marsh must help herself, for she is an orphan. There's my aunt, you say. Well, she is not a bad aunt, but she is not clever at any thing except trimming children's frocks; and in man-hunting she is a mere simpleton. Perhaps she will display more aptitude for the sport when her own girls have come to marriageable years."

"And have you decided who is to be your slave?" Lottie inquired.

"Quite. *My* mind is settled," returned Tiny, with mingled drollery and resoluteness. "I have marked my prey, and was hunting him down when you met me. Every day is not lucky. I shall be more fortunate next week. You see, I can't marry into the army, for I have no money. I can't marry into the Church, for I am a thoroughly worldly little creature; moreover, I should go clean mad with fury, if I had a clerical white slave, and he were to rebel, and preach at me, with chapter and verse, about the duty of wives to submit themselves to their husbands. And I can't marry just any prosperous Tubal-cain of this metallic part of the world; for *noblesse oblige*, and I am Sir Frederick Marsh's niece. But Mr. Albert Guerdon—young, rich, handsome—is precisely the animal that I have been looking out for ever since—"

"Ever since you first went man-hunting," said Lottie, finishing her companion's sentence.

"That's it—ever since I first went man-hunting."

"You are a strange girl," Lottie remarked,

with a little sigh. "I dare say you are not so bad as you make yourself out to be. But I won't scold you, for that would not make you better."

"Anyhow, Lottie, there is no hypocrisy about me. You will never discover me to be worse than my saucy talk," Miss Marsh responded, with an approach to seriousness. "By-the-way, child," she added, quickly, in an altered voice, taking Lottie's whip from her hand, "this is a lovely little whip. Where did you buy it?"

"It was a present."

"From your papa?"

"No."

"Your mamma, then, or one of your school-fellows?"

"No, no; it was given me by a friend—quite a new friend—no one particular."

"Indeed! Why are you blushing?"

"Because, after your ridiculous talk about Mr. Guerdon and man-hunting, I hardly know how to tell you the simple truth. Mr. Guerdon gave it to me."

"Mr. Albert Guerdon gave it to you!" Tiny Marsh exclaimed, with amazement.

"Yes, Mr. Albert Guerdon, and it was very kind of him. He was at Arleigh on the morning on which papa gave me 'Clifton,' and he said that I ought to have a new switch to match my new saddle and bridle; so he sent me the whip, with mamma's approval."

"Had you ever seen him before?"

"Never."

Tiny Marsh was relieved by Lottie's confession, though not altogether freed from a painful suspicion. After all, the gift might be, and probably was, nothing more than a young man's courtesy to a school-girl, for whom he had conceived no very strong regard—an attention to her parents rather than to her. Lottie's confusion was so transitory that it could not have proceeded from any deep emotion or tender feeling. Moreover, while it lasted, it differed from the overwhelming embarrassment of a timid girl suddenly discovered in a love affair. Still, Tiny disliked the position.

Returning the whip to its owner, Tiny Marsh observed, with her sprightliest levity,

"Here, take your whip, Lottie. It's a beauty, but a trumpery thing compared with the switch Mr. Guerdon shall give me before he is twelve months older. The gold head of *my* whip shall be set with brilliants." After a pause, she added, "And now, if you have seen enough of Lake Head, let us get back to our horses."

Having resumed their saddles, the girls cantered through the lanes to Countess Court, and made a circuit to the point where they had met each other two hours earlier. There they joined hands and said adieu, before setting their horses' heads in opposite directions.

As she rode toward the rectory-house of Drayton-Combermere, Miss Marsh thought to herself,

"Lottie is a sweet pet, and I shall get on capitally with her. As for the whip, I don't think I need trouble myself about it. No, no, Lottie won't trouble me. I have fascinated her. She is not the girl to throw flies for the fish which she knows me to be working for."

Miss Marsh was an egotist, and she had mistaken as a peculiar tribute to her own powers of pleasing the courteous winningness which qualified Lottie's manner and speech toward every one.

Far from having been captivated by Tiny's "fastness" and brilliance, Lottie, while treating her with politeness, and even with affectionateness, had come to the conclusion that Miss Marsh was a "sad mistake," or, at least, "a girl of whom she should not care to see much."

At the same time, Lottie the Gentle was too staunch and loyal a girl to be capable of saying aught to any third person to the discredit of her uncongenial acquaintance. She determined that she would not repeat to any one—not even to her mamma—a single word of Tiny's reprehensible speeches about man-hunting. She would keep away from Tiny without being unkind to her; but there was no need that she should tell her mamma why she thought Christina "a mistake."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEREIN TINY MARSH OUTSHINES HERSELF.

HITHERTO every thing that affected his relations with Lottie had happened agreeably to Albert Guerdon's wishes. He had seen her several times, and, though he was not vain enough to imagine that he had made an impression on her heart, it was clear that his appearance and manner were not displeasing to her. Circumstances had already deprived their acquaintanceship of formality, and given it some of the qualities of familiar friendship. Events had also caused her to think about him in his absence more often than he supposed. His felicitous gift of the riding-whip, by recalling him to her memory at least half a dozen times in as many days, had achieved even more than he had hoped it would accomplish. His accidental meeting with her on Broomsgrove Heath was another piece of good fortune. It was to his advantage, also, that Tiny Marsh's impudent declaration of her designs upon him had justified a part of the conversation held by Jemmy and Charley in the railway carriage, and had shown Lottie that the heir of Earl's Court and the Hammerhampton bank was an object of lively interest to the young ladies of the neighborhood. Had Albert overheard the talk, and witnessed the scene at Lake Head, recorded in the last chapter, he would have seen his advantage in the freedom with which Miss Marsh spoke of him. He might have resented the momentary pain which Tiny's notice of the whip occasioned her companion; but on reflection

he would have not regretted an incident which showed Lottie that she had received from him an attention open to more than one construction.

Truth to tell, long after the outward signs of her embarrassment had vanished, Lottie was troubled by Christina's words about the switch. It was not probable that Tiny would allude to the subject again. But at any moment another admirer of Mr. Guerdon's gift might repeat Christina's question, and ask its owner how it came into her possession. Lottie saw this, and she had no wish to satisfy every one's idle curiosity about the trivial matter. For a few moments, on her homeward way after parting with Tiny, Clifton's mistress was resolved to take her old whip again into favor, and keep Albert's present out of sight. But on reflection she saw that she could not carry out this determination without exhibiting disrespect for Albert's courtesy, and provoking him to seek for the reason of her conduct. Lottie blushed again at this thought, and wished that Mr. Albert's whip was at the bottom of the deepest mine in Boringdonshire. On reconsideration, she decided to give no more heed to Tiny's idle talk. She would continue to use the toy which had ceased to afford her unequalled satisfaction, now that she saw the discomforts which it might bring upon her. The switch had stung her far more than it could sting Clifton. It had revealed to her that, if Mr. Albert Guerdon were to make her an offer, the world would not deem his behavior unaccountable or very extraordinary.

And at this point in her history, Lottie Darling was so far from loving Albert Guerdon, or at least so far from knowing herself to be in the way to love him, that she was prepared to derive amusement from watching Tiny Marsh's attempts to catch him, and had no strong hope or fear for the man-hunter's success. On the whole, Lottie was disposed to wish failure for Christina's design; for, holding that Tiny was "a mistake," and that Albert was a very agreeable young man, she thought him deserving of a better fate than to be Christina's white slave. On the other hand, if he were to admire Christina's flippancy, and surrender himself to her unfeminine advances, he would not be so good a fellow as Lottie thought him, and after all would only merit the white slave's portion. In that case, Lottie would have overvalued him, and he would only have his deserts. Miss Darling was, therefore, ready for the drama about to be enacted before her, and however it should terminate, she meant to smile approvingly on the fall of the curtain.

In the course of the next five or six days, she knew more of Albert, and saw how the play would end, in so far as Tiny's hopes were concerned.

On the second day after the excursion to Lake Head, Lottie accompanied her papa and mamma to a small dinner-party at Beech Court. This entertainment made a lasting

impression on the young lady; for it was her "first dinner-party," and, besides enlarging her knowledge of "the neighborhood," afforded her one or two vividly agreeable insights into Albert Guerdon's character. The party numbered twelve persons, who fairly represented the tone and culture of "society" within five miles of Arleigh Manor. Mr. Barlow of Beech Court was a squire of gentle lineage and a modest estate that yielded him four thousand a year; and the company assembled at Beech Court consisted of the Marshes, Darlings, Mr. Ambrose Dockett, M.P. for Hammerhampton, and two or three other members of a coterie that, without being extremely exclusive or intolerably snobbish, declined to visit with rich ironmasters and other colossal workers in metal, who had nothing but wealth and energy and commercial success to distinguish them from the multitude of less fortunate hammerers of the Great Yard.

Toward the close of the dinner, when the ices were on the point of appearing, and the time drew nigh for claret and peaches, the conversation turned on Miss Nailsworth's doings at Clumpton.

An aged spinster, with a large income, which she spent as her very High-church rector, Mr. Swinnick, told her to spend it, Miss Nailsworth of Clumpton was a notability in the south-west corner of Boringdonshire. To the younger ladies of the district her costume appeared delightfully comical; for in her seventy-sixth year she adhered to the feminine adornments that were fashionable in the closing decade of the last century, and never appeared in a ball-room without a preposterous head-covering, which she called her "toque." But the antiquated and hard-featured gentlewoman was less famous for the dress which Tiny Marsh thought supremely ridiculous than for the ecclesiastical proceedings that divided clerical opinion at Owleybury.

The talk about the new chantry in Miss Nailsworth's park was animated and slightly fervent at Mr. Barlow's dinner-table. Clumpton and its lady were not in high favor at Beech Court. Speaking as a clergyman of the Establishment, and also as a country gentleman of Conservative principles, the Rector of Drayton-Combermere objected to any thing that caused a stir, and implied dissatisfaction with the ordinary working of an ancient institution. He believed that Mr. Swinnick (Miss Nailsworth's confessor) was a well-intentioned man, but was of opinion that he would do well to sell his singing-boys, and replace them with a pack of beagles. Hunting parsons had done more for the Church than ascetic priests would ever accomplish for her. Mr. Dockett, who had been sent to Parliament by a combination of Low-churchmen and zealous dissenters, was more vehement. He would like to see Mr. Swinnick flogged through every town in Boringdonshire, and then hanged at Hammerhampton—a desire that was all the more piquant because it ema-

nated from the lips of a senator who was pledged to exert himself in Parliament for the abolition of flogging in the army and all capital punishments. As an Oxford man, Sir James Darling spoke respectfully of an ecclesiastical movement which had originated in his University. A judge and the author of a famous treatise on church-rates, he professed affection for the Church, and jealousy for the preservation of her legal rights. His continental education having disqualified him for feeling strongly on the subject, Albert Guerdon listened silently to the discussion, until Tiny Marsh gave him an opening for a few words on points remote from the chief issues of the debate.

Miss Marsh was amusing and impartial. Regarding the Clumpton doings from jocular or lightly conversational points of view, she defended or ridiculed them as she saw an opportunity for displaying her smartness. Having driven over to Clumpton on the previous Sunday morning, and attended at a celebration, she could speak as an eye-witness. She could assure her hearers that the whole thing was very lively and picturesque, and done in the best possible taste.

"The choristers," remarked the young lady, "are charming little fellows, with such angelic faces that it is difficult to imagine them capable of eating toffee, and playing at marbles, and fighting one another, like Dr. Watts's dogs, that delighted to bark and bite. By-the-way, one of them had the remains of a black eye. I remarked it to aunt as we came out of the chantry. But the choristers are commonplace by the side of the curates."

"Indeed! do tell us about them!" inquired Mrs. Dockett, who wished to bring Tiny "out," in order that her excited husband might have time to recover his equanimity.

"Oh! Mrs. Dockett, they are indescribably picturesque, with their dainty little surplices, worn open, and falling no lower than the knee, so that their long black skirts may be seen to advantage. Instead of the old-fashioned B.A. and M.A. hoods, they wear narrow scarfs of white silk, embroidered with gold thread. Their 'get up' is faultless, and they intone like professional singers. To hear them is to imagine that they were educated at the opera-houses, instead of Oxford and Cambridge. The handsomest and most dandified of them, whose scarf ended with tags ever so long, of gold braid, preached us a sermon in the middle of the service. In its way it was a model sermon—short, pithy, and deliciously personal. It was addressed to the fairer side of the congregation, and enjoined us ladies to avoid vain display in our dress."

A light laugh, from three or four of her auditors, rewarding Tiny for this "hit," for the historic part of which the narrator was entirely indebted to her imagination (as the preacher had not alluded to feminine costume), she raised her hands dramatically, and continued in the same vein,

"Oh! he was delightful on that point! He

positively looked me full in the face when he said, 'Do not ask yourselves, when purchasing an article of raiment, "Is this the fashion?" but rather inquire, "Will it become me as a member of the church?"' I do really believe that he would like every girl to dress like a Sister of Mercy, with an outrageous poke-bonnet, and an inexplicable combination of dinner-napkins on her head."

"I don't think," Lottie Darling observed, "that the head-dress of a sister is unbecoming. I have often been very agreeably impressed by a pair of thoughtful, womanly eyes gazing tenderly at me from beneath the delicate white coif."

Albert was on the point of saying, "I agree with you, Miss Darling," when the loquacious Tiny, who meant to play as long as possible with the conversational ball, struck in:

"My dear Lottie, you are a mistress in the art of putting things! None but an artist could venture to call that dinner-napkin device 'a delicate white coif.' Anyhow, you will allow that a woman is not better than other women because, instead of wearing a pretty bonnet or a feathered hat, she covers her head with a thing—a delicate white coif, if you like to term it so—fashioned for the sole purpose of rendering its wearer conspicuous, and calling attention to her *profession*?"

Tiny laid a malicious accent on the last word of this speech.

"Of course," Lottie assented, "a woman's goodness is independent of her dress, though it is well that her dress should be in harmony with her character and vocation."

"But may I venture to suggest," observed Albert, coming to Lottie's relief, "that, instead of being devised to draw attention to its wearer, the sister's head-dress was at first selected for her because it was an orderly and commonplace covering, that would save her from being conspicuous? Like the Quaker's garb, which in the seventeenth century was the ordinary dress of simple men, and only became peculiar as it gradually fell out of fashion, the religious woman's coif was for generations the regular head-dress of her sex, and has grown to be conspicuous because secular women have relinquished it."

"But, Mr. Guerdon, you don't think it tasteful?" urged Tiny, looking at Albert in her sweetest way.

"I can't say that I altogether like it," replied Albert. "It has an antiquated appearance; and we are apt to prefer for our companions an ugly costume that is the mode, to a picturesque one which has fallen out of vogue, and with which we have no strong personal associations. But though I might not select it for a secular gentlewoman of the present date, I have seen fashionable bonnets that are far less tasteful than the coif."

"Don't bring our bonnets into the discussion. Let us keep to the coif, which is distinct from them."

"Pardon me—the coif, in its simplest form, is nothing but a folded kerchief, and every variety of the lady's bonnet had its origin in one or two folded kerchiefs. In the market-place of the old German towns on the Rhine, you may see on the heads of the humbler women arrangements of kerchiefs that indicate every style of modern bonnet. A clever peasant girl with a pair of head kerchiefs will produce from them twenty different fashions of the bonnet in as many minutes. By pulling the lower kerchief more or less forward, she gives herself more or less of the sun-shade, whose extreme development is the poke-bonnet. By letting the upper kerchief fall more or less about her neck, she gives you diversities of the bonnet frill, that a little millinery of ribbons and lace would make highly ornamental."

"Capital—capital!" exclaimed Christina, whose applause was not mere banter and polite adulation. "I wish I could repay you for your notes on bonnets by lecturing as learnedly on the archæology of the hat. Of course you can make bonnets as well as talk about them?"

"Allow me, Miss Marsh, to come over to Drayton-Combermere in the course of next week, and give you a practical lesson in bonnet-making."

"Pray come," responded Tiny, with eager cordiality.

Albert flattered himself that he had drawn Miss Marsh away from Clumpton chantry and "Miss Nailsworth's doings," a topic on which Tiny had talked with a flippancy that he saw was by no means acceptable to Lottie Darling, who, being little more than a school-girl, of course regarded clerical men and things reverentially, and was more thoroughly convinced than ever that Christina was "a mistake."

But Albert congratulated himself too soon.

Returning instantly to a subject out of which she saw that more fun could be made, Tiny resumed her satire on the chantry:

"Anyhow, it must be admitted that the dress of the Clumpton nuns is not picturesque, and that it contrasts strikingly with the elegant attire of the officiating clergy of the chantry. Indeed, it seems to be a maxim with Mr. Swinnick and his friends that, while religious women should clothe themselves in the ugliest ways conceivable, men should demonstrate their pious zeal by foppery. Not that I disapprove of the Clumpton service. It is very enlivening, and it is instructive to see how our dear old friend, the Church Service, may be re-arranged, and redressed, and sung so completely out of its old style that it is scarcely possible to recognize it. It is like meeting one's grandmother, without her cap and stick, in the full ball-dress of a belle in her twentieth year."

"Umph!" said Mr. Dockett, again growing purple in the face. "It is all very well for the young ladies to speak up for enlivening services, but—"

"Now, my dear Mr. Dockett," Miss Marsh entreated pathetically, holding up her white

hands, and showing off her delicate little arms, "don't say any thing in behalf of simplicity of observances. Simplicity means dullness; and if you become the champion of devout dullness, I shall be forced to describe how we are bored twice a week with Protestant simplicity at Drayton-Combermere."

"Tut, tut, Tiny, don't tell tales out of school," Miss Marsh's uncle observed, with the good-humor that was never ruffled by his niece's sauciest sallies.

"Don't be alarmed, uncle," rejoined Tiny, "I shall deal leniently with the rector of our parish. And how can any one say any thing against the orthodoxy of your sermons? How should they be otherwise than sound, from a theological point of view, as they were all written by my right reverend grandpapa, the Bishop of Owleybury, in George the Third's time? But they *do* want sprightliness and point. You should put your valuable collection of MS. sermons by a deceased prelate (as they say in newspaper advertisements) into my hands, uncle, and ask me to touch them up for you."

The rector of Drayton-Combermere laughed with noisy glee; and while the reverend baronet was thus rewarding his niece for displaying her smartness at his expense, Lottie glanced shyly at Albert Guerdon, and was pleased to see that he did not encourage Tiny with even the faintest smile.

Fortunately the peaches and grapes, which were now submitted to the critical attention of Mr. Barlow's guests, became the topic of conversation; and, as the host never neglected an opportunity to vaunt the merits of his garden, and expatiate on the arrangements of his hot-houses, the talk passed from ritualism to horticulture.

On the following Sunday, Albert Guerdon breakfasted early, and rode over to Clumpton for the morning service. There is no need to ask whether he would have done so had not Sir James Darling, while sipping his coffee after the ladies had withdrawn from the Beech Court dining-room, intimated to the young man his intention to visit the chantry on the earliest opportunity. It is enough to say that on taking a seat in the congregation, Albert was not surprised to find himself next the judge, and to see Lottie and Lady Darling among the women on the opposite side of the chapel.

On the dispersion of the assembly, Albert and Lottie retired from the church in a frame of mind very different from the temper in which Tiny Marsh had quitted the same place on the previous Sunday. They had seen nothing to ridicule, and much to admire in the celebration. The music of the noble organ and well-disciplined choir had affected them, as fine sacred melody is wont to affect sensitive hearers. They had not derived much pleasure from the show of surplices and ecclesiastical vestments; but they had listened with satisfaction to a thoughtful and admirably delivered sermon, from the same preacher whom Tiny Marsh had

also heard in the pulpit, and had described as "the most dandified of the curates." Moreover, it had not escaped the notice of Albert and Lottie that the congregation, which filled every seat of the chapel, consisted chiefly of poor people, many of whom appeared, from their dress and style, to be workers in the porcelain factories of Rigworthy.

"I don't think," Lottie observed to Albert, as they walked together through the park to the gate where the Arleigh pony phaeton was waiting them, "that Christina Marsh gave us a fair description of the Clumpton chantry."

As the young people were several paces in the rear of Sir James and Lady Darling, these words were audible to no one but Albert.

"People often say unfair things," returned Albert, "when their object is to shine as brilliant talkers. In a certain way Miss Marsh is very amusing; but she often makes speeches which might as well be unsaid."

Urging nothing in defense of the absent "mistake," but forbearing to say any thing to put her still lower in Albert's esteem, Lottie observed,

"I do not say that the Clumpton celebration is precisely for my frame of mind. There is too much stir and music. It lacks repose. It may be due to habit and association that I prefer a more tranquilizing form of worship; but I think I would not habitually attend a church whose services wanted quietude, and afforded me no opportunities for prayerful meditation."

"You must remember," replied Albert, "that, by reason of its novelty, this service excites you more than it does persons who are familiar with its arrangements. Probably it is not less soothing than impressive to the regular frequenters of the chantry."

"That is very likely," Lottie assented. She added, after a pause, "Anyhow, Mr. Swinnick is doing a good work. The chapel was crowded, and it contained a large proportion of the people whom it is most difficult to draw to places of worship. So long as people are brought to a church, it is not well for any one to be censorious respecting the influences which bring them together for religious exercise. To rouse heedless natures, and make the world better than it is, Mr. Guerdon, if I were a clergyman, I would walk barefoot, or perpetrate any eccentricity which would help to accomplish my purpose."

The earnestness with which Lottie delivered this simple speech caused Albert to respond with corresponding fervor,

"And though you are not a clergyman, you would like to do something to make the world better?"

"How can I feel otherwise," Miss Darling replied, with seriousness, and an agreeable freedom from self-righteousness, "at this moment when we are walking away from the church where we have been praying?"

"It pleases me to hear you say so."

Looking at him with an expression of sur-

prise, Lottie said, "Surely you did not imagine that I could feel otherwise!"

Albert smiled as he answered,

"No, no. Of course, I knew your mind. But it is always pleasant to hear right feeling rightly expressed."

By which reply Lottie Darling was gratified, though she did not see that the words were complimentary to herself. Her pleasure was of a very simple and unegotistic kind. Mr. Guerdon's words made her feel that he was a young man of good principles; and Lottie enjoyed thinking well of her friends.

During her drive back to Arleigh in the basket carriage with her papa and mamma, Lottie said little and thought much. She thought a good deal about Albert Guerdon, then cantering homeward to Earl's Court; and as the pony carriage turned into the grounds of the manor-house, a smile brightened her face when it occurred to her that he was not likely to fall a prey to the man-hunter. Albert had become an object of interest to her, though she was not aware of it. When she thus rejoiced secretly that a particular girl would not win Albert's love, Lottie was moving quickly and unconsciously to the state of feeling in which she would desire him for herself.

CHAPTER XV.

A PROFESSOR WHO KNEW JUST NOTHING ABOUT IT.

THE course of true love bids fair to run smoothly when a young man has rendered himself generally acceptable to the object of his affections, and when, besides being quite free from *penchant* for another admirer, the girl of his choice has a papa and mamma who cordially desire that his suit may be successful. For a while Albert's romance promised to falsify a familiar Shakspearean adage. Lottie smiled upon him, though she was still unaware of his hopes. Sir James and Lady Darling encouraged him to be their almost daily visitor, and to protract his calls to Arleigh Manor to a most unfashionable length. Under these circumstances, had he been a diffident lover, he would not have failed to think himself on the highway to triumph. But, as the readers of this page are aware, Albert, while perfectly innocent of insolence, was altogether free from conventional fears for the result of his operations. At the same time, the joyous hopefulness of the pursuer did not diminish the pleasure of the pursuit, or cause him to omit a single precaution that he would have taken for the attainment of his end, had he been less blissfully confident, or striving for the prize against desperate odds.

Had it not been for Blanche Heathcote, and his father's wishes respecting her, Albert would have been quite content with his prospects and the state of his affairs. But in the full sun-

shine of present felicity he foresaw—or rather, let it be said, he secretly strove not to foresee—difficulty and trouble arising from his sire's ambition for his enrichment by marriage. Again and again he wished that Blanche Heathcote would put herself conveniently out of his way. He did not want her to drown herself in the Menai Straits, or die opportunely of a rapid consumption. He only thought that she would be acting in accordance with the fitness of things if she would fall in love with a tall soldier, and announce to her guardians that she would, with their sanction, relinquish her maiden surname before Christmas. If Blanche would only dispose of herself in this pleasant and innocent fashion, Albert was sure that his father would cordially welcome Lottie to his arms as an unexceptionable daughter-in-law. But as long as Blanche and her fortune were in the market, Albert was afraid that Sir James Darling's daughter would not appear to the great banker of Hammerhampton a fit mistress for Earl's Court. But enough for the day is the evil thereof, especially when the day is quite devoid of evil. Albert would be happy while he could. He would win Lottie's love, and then find out some way whereby to render his choice acceptable to his purse-proud sire. Of course, if he had been perfectly unselfish, he would have shrunk from the thought of drawing Lottie into an engagement that might expose her to unkindness and insult from his father. But Albert was not completely unselfish. He was a man—and, moreover, a young man. Though he had never sown any wild oats, the devil had a lien on his moral nature.

Albert soon discovered that he might spare himself the trouble of inventing pretexts for calling at Arleigh Manor. The welcome guest needs no excuse for showing himself where he gives pleasure. The gladness which such a visitor occasions is a sufficient justification of his presence; and Mary Darling, who knew right well the purpose of Albert's daily appearances at Arleigh long before Lottie condescended to look for the reason of them, never saw the young man approach her drawing-room window without experiencing a renewal of her joy. Her girl would not be taken from her by marriage. Moreover, every additional day of intercourse with Albert confirmed Lady Darling in her high opinion of the young man's cleverness and goodness. The same was the case with Sir James Darling. Under these circumstances it would have been egregiously ridiculous had Albert continued to bring Lady Darling magazines which she had no wish to read, or plants which her gardener could obtain at her bidding. So Albert scorned to use needless fictions, and went over the fields with buoyant heart and light steps to Arleigh, because he was welcome there, and wanted there; and, above all, because he wished to be there. As for Lottie, the frequency of his visits did not for some weeks rouse her astonishment, or provoke her curiosity, or give her a single alarming sus-

picion. In their inexperience, young people are apt to regard the strangest occurrences as mere matters of course; and Lottie, being a young and inexperienced maiden, merely looked on Albert's visits as incidents in the ordinary way of existence. She was unfamiliar with rural life, and presumed that a country house always had a young man loitering about it, just as it had a watch-dog in the stable-yard, and a hawk with a tied wing in the kitchen garden.

Under these same circumstances, also, it was not surprising that Lady Darling and Sir James said it was a bright thought when Albert Guerdon suggested that it would be well for the judge to put up a couple of targets in the "promontory," where Lottie might go through a regular course of archery discipline. Sir James was so struck by the merits of the proposal that he wondered how he had not sooner and spontaneously thought of the plan for giving his girl another lady-like accomplishment. When the judge ordered the targets, and bought Lottie a bow and arrows at Hammerhampton, he did so on the understanding that Albert would teach the "young lady how to shoot," and qualify his pupil to carry off a prize at the Owleybury archery club before the end of the archery season.

Croquet was unknown, and "Les Grâces" out of fashion, in the days when Albert and Lottie fell in love with one another; but archery was in high favor with the "neighborhood." The Owleybury Toxophilites, notwithstanding the exclusiveness of the club, numbered in all a hundred and twenty members; and there was scarcely a single country house of prosperity and refinement, within ten miles of Arleigh, that had not its butts in a safe and conveniently adjacent paddock. An invitation to a garden party at Beech Court or Countess Court, or any other gentleman's court of the district, implied archery for the archers, and idleness among the flower-beds for those who could not speed the arrow to its mark.

On the arrival of the targets at Arleigh, Sir James Darling was on the point of ordering his gardener to fix them at once in the lower paddock, known as "the promontory." But Lady Darling interposed with a suggestion that they had better wait till Albert should arrive in the morning, and select the shooting-ground.

"Oh yes, we must wait for Mr. Albert Guerdon," Lottie cooed. "He will be here in the morning to give me my first lesson."

There was a pleasant school-girl's seriousness in Lottie's face as she spoke of her "first lesson."

As Sir James had no court anywhere on the following day, he was at home when Albert selected the site, measured out the ground, and raised the butts.

"Are you a member of the Owleybury Toxophilites?" inquired Sir James of the young man.

"I was elected last week; and I hope that Lady Darling and Miss Darling will allow me to enter their names in the candidates' book."

"You have never won a prize there yet?"

"No; nor anywhere else."

"But you are a crack shot with the bow?"

"I don't think I ever drew a bow in all my life."

Sir James burst out laughing, as he patted Albert lightly on the shoulder, and said,

"Think, think—have you never drawn the long-bow? Why, you offered to be Lottie's instructor."

Albert reddened slightly under Sir James's merriment, and the ladies' looks of amusement and surprise. But he was equal to the occasion.

"Surely I did; but at present," the young man observed, gravely, while his eyes twinkled with fun, "I know just nothing about the sport. The best teachers are those who learn as they teach, and are only ten minutes in advance of their pupils. In the present instance the teacher won't be even that much ahead of his pupil; for, as I tell you frankly, I know just nothing about it, except what I have picked up from 'The Toxophilites' Manual,' a most entertaining little work, and from seeing people shoot. But I'll undertake to say that my pupil will do me credit, and carry off a prize at Owleybury, before ever I win one."

Throwing aside all thought for his judicial dignity, Sir James screamed himself purple with laughter before he cried out,

"Oh! your frankness! oh, your impudence, Albert! You are a sheer impostor! You offered to be Lottie's instructor, and now you are compelled to confess that you know nothing about it! You are a sheer impostor, Albert."

Sir James had never before called the young man by his Christian name.

"No, no, James," interposed Lady Darling, merrily, "don't make him out worse than he is. He only confesses that he knows *just* nothing about it."

"But, Mary," ejaculated the judge, in the middle of another burst of laughter, "he palmed himself off upon us a perfect master of the art!"

"I protest against the charge of imposture. I never said," cried Albert, "that I had handled a bow. All that I ventured to say was that I should have great pride in doing my best to be Miss Darling's efficient instructor."

"It won't do," rejoined Sir James, when he had recovered his breath. "Your incompetence is admitted by yourself; and I must look elsewhere for a teacher for Lottie."

"I am quite competent," Albert insisted, stoutly. And then turning to Lottie, who all this while had been shedding smiles and pouring forth ripples of laughter on the merry group, he asked, "Does my pupil repudiate me?"

"No, Mr. Guerdon," returned Lottie, with appropriate fervor and seriousness, "your pupil does not reject her professor who knows just nothing about it. She accepts him, with per-

fect confidence that he will prove her very efficient teacher in the mystery of archers. To the best of her ability she will do every thing that he bids her do; and she will do it in perfect faith that it is the very thing which ought to be done."

"She has faith in you," exclaimed Sir James, "in spite of your detection. It is a triumph of faith over knowledge."

"I have perfect confidence in him," Lottie repeated, "as a teacher of archery, and, like a docile pupil, I will submit myself to his discipline."

"It is a bargain, Miss Darling," cried Albert. "Let us observe an old sacred custom, and join hands upon it, in the presence of witnesses."

"By all means," Lottie assented, approaching her professor, and extending to him her fair right hand.

As Albert took her hand, a bright color suddenly flushed the usually bloodless surface of his cheeks and temples; for the thought seized him that the time was not far distant when he would venture to kiss the girl's tender, blue-veined palm.

And Albert proved Lottie's efficient instructor in archery. Day after day the young man slipped slyly over the fields from Earl's Court to Arleigh, under the cover of green hedges and murmurous trees; and morning after morning he gave Lottie her lessons in speeding winged shafts to the bull's-eye. And if he was a clever teacher, she was a quick pupil. They were both of them fit players of the nice pastime. Lottie, though she was delicately formed, was much stronger than she looked. She had a firm hand and strong wrist for a maiden; a good eye for measuring distances, and nice discernment of the varying influences of breeze and atmosphere which affect an arrow's course. She had also the temper that could endure disappointments with patience, and an intelligence that caught quickly the lessons of failures. Ere long she never failed to make an inner ring without seeing the reason of her misadventure. And when she sent, as she often did, a shaft into the bull's-eye, the hit was never a lucky accident, but the result of fine perception, nice calculation, and delicate application of force.

When the archery practice had continued for a fortnight, Albert Guerdon brought over to Arleigh a fresh supply of arrows, and a new quiver for his pupil, who accepted the present with pleasure, remembering her papa's statement of a certain social law. She was sure that her acceptance of the green and gold sheath would meet with her mamma's approval.

A few days later, Albert said,

"Miss Darling, you are shooting splendidly!"

"How soon," she asked, "shall I be fit to exhibit my prowess at Owleybury?"

"I was at the 'Toxophilites' last night, when you and Sir James and Lady Darling were elected members with acclamation."

"Mamma!" cried Lottie to Lady Darling, who was sitting, after her wont during the archery lessons, under an elm, out of the way of danger, and hard by the cool, gurgling water of the Luce, "you are a toxophilite!"

In acknowledgment of which gratifying news, Mary Darling smiled and waved her hand over her quiet brows. The mother was very happy in her distant seat, meditating over the joys in store for her child, while they had their game and innocent gossip beyond her range of hearing.

"Was the shooting good?" Lottie asked.

"Pon my honor," Albert replied, vehemently, "there was not a girl on the ground who shot much better than you!"

"Were the good shots there?"

"All the crack ones; and in another fortnight you will be able to hold your own with the best."

Lottie's face crimsoned with girlish exultation.

"You are not flattering me?" she asked, as the suspicion seized her that he might be paying her a compliment scarcely justified by facts.

"Trust me!" Albert rejoined, gravely.

"I will trust you. But has not your kindness, and a wish to please me, influenced your judgment too much?"

"No; Miss Henderson, who has carried off the first ladies' prize in three successive years, was there; and, though every one said she was shooting fairly well for her, if not at her best, she did not make a larger score, centres and inners, than you have made this morning."

"What delightful news!"

"I will never mislead you in any thing by excessive praise."

"Thank you. I do not like to be flattered."

After a few seconds' silence, Lottie inquired,

"Shall we go to the next meeting?"

"Of the club?"

"Yes—of the Owleybury Toxophilites."

"I would rather you did not."

"Why?"

"At present no one beyond the bounds of Arleigh knows of our shooting?"

"No one. We agreed to keep it secret till we had educated ourselves up to a respectable proficiency; and I have told none of our friends about our proceedings. The Marshes and Hillsboroughs and Newingtons, and several other people, have been here during the last fortnight; but though they walked round the garden, they did not see the targets. You see, they are fixed so close to the fence, and under the dip of the hill, that people in the upper grounds don't get a sight of them."

"I did not mean them to be seen. I selected the ground with a view to secrecy."

"You had that in view from the first?"

"From the first."

A look of amusement and surprise came to Lottie's face at this confession. She did not blush again; but she colored slightly at discovering how her professor had done with a

definite purpose what she had supposed him to have done without consideration, or, at least, with no undeclared object. She had a vague feeling that she was in some mysterious way passing out of her own keeping into his hands.

"And you think the secrecy may as well be maintained a little longer?"

"Let us keep our shooting dark," urged Albert, lowering his voice to a tone of mystery, "till the last day of August—the day for the grand contest of the Owleybury Toxophilites, when we will appear as novices among the practiced archers, and carry off the first two prizes. You shall carry off the 'prize quiver,' with its golden belt, which will have a jeweled clasp. I will win the bow with silver tips, the prize to be shot for by the men."

"It is impossible that we should succeed!" ejaculated Lottie. "You may be the conqueror of the men, but it would be ridiculous presumption in me to hope to vanquish Florence Henderson—the victor of three successive seasons."

"Both of us shall triumph!" responded Albert, warmly.

"Your voice gives me courage and hope."

"The event shall realize the hope!"

Lottie was almost breathless with excitement at the ambitious project.

"Only we must work hard," continued Albert. "Your eye needs no further training, and it must be no common breeze to baffle your discernment and knowledge of the wind. But you want a little more strength of muscle. Your fingers and wrist lose their steadiness after exertion."

"They do," the pupil admitted, meekly.

"You would do well to work an hour a day at your 'digitorium,'" suggested the professor, "to strengthen your fingers."

"I will do so," Lottie promised, obediently.

"And in the mean time we will be dark," insisted Albert.

"Very dark," said the fair girl, in a solemn, almost in a sepulchral tone.

"Not a soul is to know of our purpose," urged the adviser.

"Oh! Mr. Albert," pleaded Lottie, raising her voice to a higher key, as she protested against such utter "darkness," "you must not bind me not to tell mamma and papa. At least I must tell mamma. I never had an important secret from her in all my life."

There was a new joy in Albert's heart as the girl thus implored that he would not bind her to be "dark" to her mamma. Clearly he was getting on with her, and she was fast falling under his dominion, if she felt that she might not without his permission impart their design to Lady Darling.

"Of course, we will take Sir James and Lady Darling into our counsel. We will work, and they shall encourage us," he said. "Three persons are enough for a conspiracy in the eye of the law; but our plot shall have four conspirators."

"It is delightful!"

"And it would not add to our enjoyment to have more accomplices and spectators of our preparations. Our secret shootings have been very agreeable."

"They have been enjoyable beyond expression," Lottie assented, emphatically, and with a smile of thanksgiving.

She felt toward her companion something of the gratitude which a school-girl feels for a favorite professor of her favorite accomplishment.

So Lottie and Albert went on shooting at their butts, morning after morning, throughout the joyous weeks of July and the earlier part of August. The conspirators against Miss Henderson's supremacy were "dark"—dark as death. And while the archers shot their arrows to and fro with a delicious sense of secrecy, Albert—shooting darkly with a bow not made of wood—sent many a shaft into Lottie's heart. But the heart did not feel the "hits" as they were made; for each dart was tipped with a subtle poison that blinded Lottie to the archer's purpose, and made her unconscious of the wounds he gave her. She thought that her companion, while training her for victory, was only preparing himself to win the first prize for gentlemen at Owleybury. Once only during the course of August, and then only for a few foolish minutes, toward the month's close, did she suspect that her professor was compassing her defeat, and seeking something far more precious than a silver-tipped bow. It was not Albert's intention that she should see his real aim until she had carried off the quiver with the jeweled clasp.

CHAPTER XVI.

A JAR WITHOUT A QUARREL.

THE practice at the butts brought Albert and Lottie into familiar friendship, and caused them to address one another with confidential freedom. They behaved to each other more like brother and sister, or first cousins, who had lived from childhood in affectionate intimacy, rather than like two young people whose acquaintanceship had existed only for a few weeks. They did not, like brother and sister or near cousins, address one another by their Christian names; but they were fast advancing to the intercourse when, without asking or formally granting permission for the liberty, they would begin to call one another Lottie and Albert. Already it appeared to Albert to be formal and inconsistent with his brotherly demeanor to her that he should address as "Miss Darling" the girl whom his heart and fancy called "Lottie Darling," or simple "Lottie."

Now and then he unconsciously addressed her by the only name which her papa and mamma accorded to her; but hitherto he had never omitted to prelude the diminutive with a

"Miss." And while he was thus setting aside the restraints of frigid etiquette, he was pleased to observe that Lottie was beginning to familiarize her lips to the utterance of his Christian name by calling him Mr. Albert. Miss Darling was not herself aware of this approach on her part to sisterly freedom. Her father and mother had fallen into the habit of calling the young man "Albert;" and following their example at a distance, and up to the limits of maidenly propriety, she was gradually and insensibly substituting Mr. Albert for the less familiar address. Having learned to think of Mr. Guerdon as Mr. Albert, she was nearing the time when, with equal simplicity and unobservance, she would call him "Albert."

There was one occasion toward the close of August—an occasion alluded to in a line of the last chapter—when Albert, taken unawares by a flood of tender feeling, was on the point of revealing to her prematurely the desire of his heart. For a moment he trembled on the fine line that divided the delicately cautious suitor from the eloquent and accepted lover. Had he yielded to the impulse which nearly vanquished his resolve, and would have slightly changed the plan of his campaign, he would in another instant have overstepped the boundary, and snapped the yielding bands which had hitherto held him in the position of Lottie's professor of archery and undeclared admirer.

His visits to Arleigh had usually been paid in the early part of the day, when his father had "gone to business" at Hammerhampton. In the afternoons he rode with his sire; and on most days, if no social engagement interfered with their ordinary way of life, the banker and his son dined together. While John Guerdon drank his bottle of '20 port, and spoke disdainfully of the lighter wines of France, Albert sipped the claret which his Continental training had taught him to prefer to the Methuen drink. The conversation at the after-dinner sittings of the sire and son does not merit commemoration; though it seldom wearied or offended Albert, who liked to hear his father descant on the merits of England in "the good old days," and magnify the virtues of "the only wine fit for an Englishman." Now and then, it must be admitted that the senior told a story which his companion was prig enough to put in the same category with Tiny Marsh's lighter achievements in table-talk, and to classify with speeches that might as well have been unsaid. And once or twice, when the veteran inquired significantly why his heir delayed to go off for his fishing excursion in Wales, it must also be confessed that Albert did not find his father good company. But as John Guerdon forbore to mention Blanche Heathcote's name, and never expatiated on the metallurgical virtues of her fat farm, Albert conceived no strong dislike for the Earl's Court dinners, and behaved like a dutiful son at "the mahogany-tree."

But on the occasion to which this chapter draws special attention, Albert, taking advan-

tage of his father's absence from home at the house dinner of the Hammerhampton Club, had dined at Arleigh Manor with Sir James Darling and the ladies. No second guest being present, Albert had of course no fault to find with the entertainment or the party. Without being dull, the table-talk was agreeably devoid of brilliance. The Darlings at home never overflowed with epigrams, or tried to sparkle in the style of commonplace people endeavoring to be playful and clever. And on the evening under consideration they enjoyed themselves and their dinner without fretting one another with paradoxes and *jeux d'esprit*. Indeed, there was nothing said between soup and dessert that made a greater impression on Albert than Lottie's avowal that she had never heard the winding, chain-like notes of the night-jar. The London-and-Brighton-bred girl was ignorant of many rural things familiar as daylight and starlight to country folk; but her ignorance was rapidly diminishing under her incessant and intelligent observation of the novel sounds, and creatures, and doings submitted to her curiosity. Lottie had eyes and ears; and she already knew more about wild birds and wild flowers, and farming, and fresh-water fish than many a flashily taught girl who has lived all her days in the country without an eye for the marvels, or ear for the music, of nature. She was familiar with the voice of the corn-crake, but she had never heard the peculiar, rattling, interminable chattering of the night-jar's throat, which had been described to her only the other day by Jane Hillsborough.

"Your curiosity shall be satisfied to-night," said Albert.

"Don't promise too much," returned Lottie, "for Jane Hillsborough says that the night-jar can only be heard once in a long while. Her home has always been in the country, and yet she has heard the night-jar only a few times."

"Miss Hillsborough is wrong," returned the young man. "She would have been right had she said that the bird can only be heard in one out of ten thousand places; but where the night-jar has once wound out his long chain of pattering tap-tap notes, he is sure to do it again, hundreds of times, night after night. And there's a most loquacious fellow that haunts the lower paddock. I heard him a few nights since."

"A few nights since?" said Lady Darling, inquiringly. "You have not dined with us for ten days."

Albert colored; for his incautious admission had nearly disclosed the fact that, not content with walking over from Earl's Court to Arleigh once a day in the morning, he often indulged himself with a nocturnal ramble through the meadows that surrounded Lottie's home.

"I happened to be walking round this way a night or two since," he said, dryly. And Mary Darling, who divined the truth, was not so *maladroit* as to press for a fuller explanation.

On the contrary, Lady Darling put an end

to her guest's transient embarrassment by dismissing the night-jar from the conversation with an opportune reference to a forth-coming horticultural show where her gardener would exhibit some grapes and a melon.

After dinner there was music in the drawing-room.

Lottie's voice was not powerful; but it had sweetness, flexibility, and an agreeable richness in the lower notes. Her organ had, moreover, been well trained at Brighton, so that she made the most of its ability. No prima donna for a crowded assembly, she was a charming songstress for the hearth; and almost every evening she was required to exercise her vocal skill for the gratification of her father, who delighted to hear her warble simple ballads that had been fashionable in the London drawing-rooms of his early manhood. Sir James had also a whimsical taste for making her sing pathetic or humorously romantic songs that were written for vocalists of the sterner sex. Her execution of "Kathleen Mavourneen" he declared inimitable; and the stately little man's enthusiasm had more than once caused him to reward her rendering of "Bonny Annie Laurie" with vehement "encores" and clappings of his chumpy hands.

On the particular evening toward the end of August, Lottie was not allowed to leave the piano until she had given her hearers at least half a dozen lyrical trifles. She sang them "Go, deceiver, go," and then, putting her heart in the Highlands, pursued the wild deer with liquid melodies. Two of her ballads were of the humorously romantic sort, and she rendered them admirably, bringing out the fun of their laughable points with a delicate emphasis and piquant drollery that were charmingly remote from the exaggerations and burlesque effects of a commonplace comic songstress. Of course the fastidious connoisseurs of harmony would have derided all this melody as mere kitchen music; but the kitchen music of superficial connoisseurs has its recommendations for auditors of feeling and cultivated taste. Albert understood music, and had heard the best operas and artists of Europe, and yet he was greatly delighted by Lottie's skillful treatment of simple things. When she sang "Molly Bawn" with equal feeling and fun, he was inexpressibly pleased. During the utterance of this humorous absurdity, Sir James sought the young man's eye; but Albert was regarding the singer intently as she warbled,

"The cruel watch-dog's at me barking;
He takes me for a thief, you see;
For he knows I'd steal you, Molly Darling,
And then transported I should be."

Sir James had special memories and associations that caused him to think this trifle the best of all his daughter's songs.

It was past eleven before Albert bade his friends farewell for the night; and, when he had left the manor-house for his moonlight walk to Earl's Court, he startled them by suddenly re-

appearing at one of the open windows of the drawing-room, and sending his voice into the quiet room.

"What, Albert!" asked the judge, "are you back again, like a bad shilling?"

"There's my night-jar," said Albert, "grinding and winding away at full play in the promontory. If you will come out with me into the garden, over the lawn, as far as the ha-ha, Miss Darling, you may hear a songstress less tuneless, but far more persevering than yourself. Do come."

"That's delightful! I will come," Lottie responded, gleefully.

"My dear child," interposed the thoughtful mother, "the dew is on the grass. Surely, Albert, the grass is too wet!"

"But my shoes are thick enough to keep the wet out. Look at them," cried the girl, gathering up the skirt of her dress, and putting one of her tiny slippered feet on Lady Darling's knee for inspection.

"Well, you may go," assented Mary Darling, when she had satisfied herself that Lottie's kid shoes were water-proof, at least for a few minutes, "but put this wrapper over your head."

In another minute Lottie had stepped through the open window, and, having crossed the gravel of the terrace, was walking over the lawn to the ha-ha, with her right hand on Albert's arm.

On the disappearance of the young people from the drawing-room, Sir James, who did not like to be left out of the fun, observed to his wife,

"Let us follow them, Mary. I have not heard the night-jar since I was a school-boy."

"No, no, James," responded Mary Darling; "leave the boy and girl alone. They will come to no harm for a few minutes out of our sight. Perhaps" (and here Mary blushed, and lowered her voice almost to a whisper)—"perhaps Albert wishes her to hear something besides the night-jar."

The judge caught her meaning at once. It would have been strange if he had not caught it.

"Bless me!" ejaculated Sir James, "that never occurred to me! You women are very quick at seeing things."

"A mother," Lady Darling replied, gravely, "ought to be quick at seeing things which concern her daughter's happiness."

"Well, I'll give them five minutes," said the judge, looking at his watch.

"If they have not returned in ten minutes," his wife replied, "I'll give you leave to go out and look for them, if—if—"

"Go on, Mary. Let me hear the condition."

"If you promise not to come upon them too suddenly," was the answer.

Sir James Darling gave a short, low laugh, expressive of good-natured mischief and kindly cynicism.

Raising her gentle face toward her husband, and regarding him with a look of fondness and

pride that reminded him vividly of old times, Mary Darling observed, with quaint frankness, "We liked to be alone sometimes, James, when we were young people."

"And, thank God, Mary," exclaimed Sir James, flushing scarlet and speaking hotly, "to this day we like our own society better than any other company."

Whereupon the brightness of happy emotion came into Mary Darling's eyes as she murmured,

"Oh! James, what a fortunate girl I was to win your love! What a happy woman I have been as your wife!"

While the two old fools were billing and cooing in this fashion on a drawing-room sofa, the two young fools were standing on the pitch of the Arleigh lawn, where the sunk fence divided the garden of the manor-house from the strip of grass which lay between the ha-ha and the lower paddock. At their feet, on the other side of the fence, were the judge's score of sheep, huddled together in a knot, some of them resting on the ground, while the others bit the fine herbage audibly. At the distance of ten paces farther down the hill-side, the Alderney cows were visible under the huge-armed elms, whose configuration stood out darkly and boldly against the starry sky, in which the full moon was shining with mild effulgence. Lottie had her right hand raised over her ear, and, as she caught the night-jar's chain-like rattle, she looked before her and downward to the misty meadow, from which the sound ascended. Albert, also, was listening to the bird's peculiar and scarcely musical notes; but, as he caught the mechanical windings of the chirping noise, he gazed at Lottie, on whose face the moon shed an unspeakably beautifying radiance. She had never appeared more lovely to her lover—never so gentle and spiritual, so pure of earthly dross, and rich in heavenly grace. It may be a feeble commonplace to repeat a cruelly abused word, and to say that for a moment she appeared to him angelic—a creature who had come to him, for one brief, sacred hour, from the silent and sinless heavens, rather than the girl of veritable flesh and blood, who had been his companion, morning after morning, for several weeks. But though the historian may shrink from paying his heroine a vulgarly hackneyed compliment, he must discharge his functions, even though they require him to call her an angel.

For a minute the soothing rays of the state-ly moon clothed her face with such a supernatural loveliness, and glorified her presence with an effulgence so ineffably pure, that Albert almost feared that he had lost what he loved, while gazing on a being still more lovely. The light, and stillness, and magic of the hour had transfigured her to the young man's imagination, and given her eyes a glamour that thrilled him with a fearful ecstasy. There was her pure brow surmounted by the folds of rich brown hair, on which she had put a light cloud of whitest wool. He saw the dark silken arches

of her brows, and the fine black lashes, showing in wondrous contrast with the whiteness of her eyelids and frontal curves. There were her thin lips and delicate profile; her rounded chin and tiny throat; her exquisitely moulded bust and soft, tapering arms; and the flowing robe that veiled her maidenly figure. He had seen all these charms before; but the witchery of moonlight made them other than they had been in former times. Would she ever be herself again, so that he would dare once more to speak to her? Would the awfully fascinating transfiguration progress, until she should rise to her proper home, and leave him nothing but the memory of a desolating illusion?

Her voice relieved him of a torturing happiness, and restored him to himself.

"It is silent," she said. "The sound is not musical—it is almost very unmusical—and yet it holds the fancy. I think it almost touches the heart. Its charm is that it expresses happiness in a new language. I wish the bird would begin again."

"If we wait a minute, we shall very likely hear him once more."

But though they waited the minute, and something more, in unbroken and expectant silence, they were not rewarded for their patience with another song. The uncivil bird would not renew his monotonous winding.

"How lovely the night is!—this place, the distant landscape, the luminous firmament!" said Albert.

"Look at the sheep," responded Lottie, who, on bringing her gaze from the distance to the ground immediately at her feet, was surprised to see the small flock so near her. "They are enjoying themselves this cool, blissful night."

"So are the Alderneys yonder; look at them under the elms."

"They are too far off for me to be able to sympathize with them. But I am near enough to see the happiness of this cozy group of ewes and yearlings. I should like to be one of them."

Whereat Albert laughed lightly, as, altogether liberated from superstitious fancies, he said, "I know some people to whom I should be impudent enough to say, in answer to such words, 'You need not go far to get your wish.' Some people are strangely like sheep in their minds, and their faces also."

"The sheep is not a foolish creature. Popular prejudice does him an injustice. He is clever to those who take the trouble to understand him."

"Hitherto, perhaps, I have not studied sheep with sufficient care. Which of that lot can you introduce me to as especially worthy of consideration?" Albert inquired, mockingly.

Replying with proper gauciness to his tone of satire, Lottie said, "If you will approach him without levity, and regard him seriously, you may learn something from the stupidest of them."

"At least they are clever enough to know

that we are near them. See how our voices are disturbing them!"

"The goose is another creature," continued Lottie, "that I have learned to respect since I have lived in the country, and have had opportunities for making his acquaintance."

By this assurance Albert was so vastly amused that he uttered a loud laugh, which was heard in the drawing-room, and disturbed Conrad, the big mastiff, in the stable-yard.

The dog gave a yelp and a growl at the untimely sound of merriment.

"Indeed," added Lottie, who was not to be laughed out of her views, or deterred from expressing them by vulgar ridicule, "I am disposed to think that there is not an animal, from the horse to the rat, and from the rat to the hedgehog, that will not be found to have a wonderful sagacity, by those who take pains to learn its ways."

Whereupon Conrad, having made up his mind that something highly reprehensible was being done by some one or other on the premises, gave tongue in earnest, and, springing the full length of his chain, barked indignantly and savagely for at least a minute.

"There is suitable applause for your vindication of the lower animals. Conrad, Miss Darling, is demonstrating his sagacity by roaring out 'Hear, hear!' in canine fashion."

"What is it that disturbs him?" Lottie asked, wonderingly, as the animal made the valley resound with another series of barks.

"Oh! he is only baying at the moon—an unprofitable amusement to which dogs are proverbially addicted."

"And there," rejoined the defender of animals, "folk-lore commits another injustice against the humbler creatures. If dogs bark more on moonlight than on dark nights, it is only because the light renders them wakeful, and enables them to see more things than they can behold in the darkness that are worthy of comment. Mr. Conrad is not so foolish as to bay at the moon."

"Anyhow, he is baying at something. What a prodigious row he is making!"

"Perhaps he is barking at us."

"He would know us even at this distance, though we are out of his sight."

"Is there a stranger prowling about the yard?"

Lottie put this question with a slight timorousness. Not that she was afraid, for, Albert being with her, she knew that no harm could be done her by tramp or poacher. But no young girl likes the thoughts of midnight strangers sneaking about her rural home.

In her transient agitation of surprise and timidity, she came nearer to Albert, and evinced no disapprobation when he took her right hand in his right hand.

"He was barking at a thief," he said, tenderly.

"What thief? Where?"

"And he was also barking at me, and no

one else. Ah! he is a wise animal. There he goes at it again!"

Lottie trembled, not from fear of robbers, but on account of the change in Albert's voice. What could that tone mean? Why was he pressing her hand so strongly!

"What thief?" said Albert, with earnestness in his voice, though his words seem jocular in print. "Remember your song, which tells the truth of me and Conrad,

'The cruel watch-dog's at me barking;
He takes me for a thief, you see;
For he knows I'd steal you—'

It was then that he was on the point of calling her "Lottie Darling." Had he finished the line, he would have added, "Oh, Lottie, I am a thief, and must steal you! I am transported already: don't let me be punished for nothing!"

But Albert paused abruptly, for Lottie's hand was suddenly withdrawn from his grasp, and though he could no longer feel the tremor of her nerves and the beatings of her pulse, he knew well that his words had suddenly and profoundly shaken her.

Drawing herself up to her full height, Lottie observed, with an air of dignity which warned him to proceed no further, and with a freezing politeness which punished him more than he deserved for his audacity,

"I think, Mr. Guerdon, you had better take me back to the drawing-room."

The voice of Albert the fearless quavered perceptibly as he said, beseechingly,

"You will not refuse, Miss Darling, to take my arm?"

Lottie could not resist the pleading tone, which she had never heard before. Relenting instantly, she placed her right hand lightly on his arm, and allowed him to conduct her back to the drawing-room window.

They crossed the lawn in silence. Conrad barked no longer. He had, perhaps, caught the notes of their last words, and learned from them that his disturbers were neither thieves nor vagabonds. Or it may be that, with super-canine cleverness, he had apprehended the particular danger which threatened his mistress, and, having done his best to avert it by admonitory barkings, was well pleased to repose in silence, and with an approving conscience, at the door of his kennel, in the rays of the moon.

"Well," asked Sir James, as he helped Lottie to climb in at the window, "have you heard the night-jar?"

"Very distinctly," Lottie answered, with her usual self-possession, "and Conrad also. What a naughty fellow he has been, to make such a noise at nothing!"

"Miss Darling is of opinion," cried Albert, gayly, "that the night-jar is less melodious than the nightingale, but quite as musical as a roasting-jack! I am off now. Good-night, Sir James. Good-night, Lady Darling. And good-night—"

Before he could include her name in the farewell, Lottie put her arm out of the drawing-room window, and shook his hand cordially. The tender-hearted simpleton was already accusing herself of having treated him unkindly, and of having exhibited more of girlish foolishness than of womanly discretion in repulsing him.

"You'll be at the butts to-morrow?" she cooed, entreatingly.

"Of course, of course. We may not miss a single morning's practice till the thirty-first," he replied, as he grasped her hand, before turning on his heel.

As soon as he had departed, Lottie kissed her papa and mamma, and went off to bed. Her manner made it clear to them that, at least for the present, they were to know nothing of what had taken place in the garden between herself and Albert.

"Good-night, papa," she said to her sire, as she gave him the kiss of farewell. "I am glad to have heard the night-jar; but I am very tired, and must have a good night's rest."

To her mamma the young lady said, "Good-night, dearest. As it is so late, of course you won't come and see me when I am in bed"—a speech which Lady Darling construed as an intimation that Lottie had had enough of even her dear mamma's society for that night.

When the door had closed on the retiring girl, Sir James observed,

"Something has happened—I am sure of it—I could see it in her eyes. And her cheeks are flushed."

"Of course something has happened," Mary Darling returned answer. "He has frightened her by some foolish speech."

"She has not refused him!" the judge said, excitedly—"that is impossible! You saw how she shook hands with him, and asked him to come over to the butts to-morrow."

"Oh! nothing like that has taken place. If she had either accepted or refused him, she would have wished me to come to her room. Depend upon it," the mother observed reassuringly, and with womanly discernment, "that he has alarmed her by a sudden and slightly premature hint. Don't you remember, James, how you frightened me one evening, about a week before I accepted you?"

Sir James recollected the incident well, and the reminiscence raised his spirits.

"To be sure I did," he assented; "and the scare that I gave you helped my suit prodigiously. It forewarned you of what was coming, and made it all the easier for you to say 'Yes,' when I was deucedly afraid that you would say 'No.' I am very glad that Albert has frightened her."

"But I am not," retorted Mary Darling, warmly and pitifully. "No one ought to terrify my timid pet. I won't allow any young man—no, not even Albert, who is the best of young men—to alarm her. My dear James, she'll be crying half the night. Young men

are so impetuous and blundering. They know nothing of a girl's sensitiveness."

"They know all about it in time," Sir James observed, coldly.

"I wish I could find courage," continued the mother, "to warn Albert of the dangers of precipitancy. He has done excellently up to this point, but even now he may reap disappointment, from rashness. I must speak to him."

"My dear Mary," urged Sir James, solemnly, "I do entreat you to leave him alone. You are a clever woman, but Albert is a clever young man—a very clever fellow—and can do very well without advice. Do you think, beauty, it would have helped matters thirty and more years since, if your dear mother (God bless her above all his other angels!) had pulled me this way and that way with instructions on the case? Leave Albert alone. Every man knows best how to make his own bear dance; and Lottie will dance very prettily in another fortnight, if Albert is left to teach her in his own way."

For a minute Mary Darling was so distracted with maternal affection and fears and anxiety that she was on the point of crying. But she was an excellent wife, and made it a rule never to shed tears in her husband's presence; so she fought the disposition toward weeping with a brave, though scarcely successful, attempt at gayety.

"What a wretched man you are, James," she exclaimed, half laughing and half sobbing, "to call that beautiful girl of ours a bear, and to compare her lover to a bear-trainer! If your own child is a bear, what must you be?"

Having uttered this playful reproof, the lady rose hastily and went up stairs. As Lottie had expressed so clearly her wish to be alone, the mother did not intrude upon her; but as she passed the entrance of the girl's room, Mary Darling looked longingly at the closed door, and breathed a prayer for the occupant of the chamber.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRIGHTENED, BUT NOT HIT.

WHEN Mr. Albert Guerdon, on his homeward way, had passed the limits of Sir James Darling's demesne, and found himself on the familiar footway that would lead him to Earl's Court, he had so completely recovered from the shock which Lottie's spirited behavior occasioned him that he could review the incidents of the previous half-hour with his usual self-complacence. No longer the Albert who had anxiously entreated Lottie to take his arm again, he was once more the lover whose overweening confidence has earned for him the disapprobation of several readers of this page.

"Nothing could have been better for me," the young man thought to himself. "I have

gone just far enough, and not an inch too far; whereas, if she had not drawn back and pulled me up sharply, I should have made her an offer on the spot, and disturbed her whole system, so that she would not, perhaps, have recovered her nerve and coolness for several days. That would have been a disastrous mistake, for she may not remit her practice at the butts; and she will require all her nerve for the contest on the thirty-first. And, by heavens! how superbly she looked as she drew away from me with freezing dignity, and awed me back in a moment to prudence and the region of the proprieties! I would run the risk of offending her outright, for the pleasure of seeing that aspect again. She was a Queen of Earth! Three minutes before she was a visitant from heaven—a ministering angel clothed in the human shape and semblance, by which the fairest of the sacred spirits render themselves visible to mortal eyes. How fearfully lovely she was then! But I prefer her when she is only a thing of human kind, and does not charm me into fancying her an inhabitant of the sky. Ah! there are her chimney-pots and trees. I sha'n't see them again for a few hours. May all God's angels hover over them throughout this heavenly night! Lottie, dear Lottie, I am praying for you!"

While uttering these last words, Albert stood near a stile at a point that afforded him a view of the elms and roofs of Arleigh Manor. He had paused in his walk, and turned half round, in order that he might take a last fond look at the house, some of whose upper windows were distinctly visible to him in the moonlight. But Albert was mistaken in thinking that the particular casement to which he kissed his hand belonged to Lottie's sleeping-room. The window admitted light to the closet in which Sir James Darling stowed away his old boots and discarded wardrobe.

In another minute, Albert had leaped the stile, and was walking briskly down hill, humming, as he went, a verse of a song which he had caught up from a corner of his memory, and had adapted to his special case—

"For Lottie is my darling,
Lottie is my joy!
And ere another month has passed
I'll be her own dear boy."

Albert knew much more of the womanly nature than is ever known by a young man who is familiar with the charms and foibles of bad women, or whose vanity impels him to loiter about the skirts of any inferior person in petticoats, whom he can amuse by vapid flattery, or win by appeals to self-interest. He had never loved till he loved Lottie. It had never occurred to him in foreign lands to regard any woman as a creature on whom it would be well for him to place his affections. Marriage, and arrangements for it, were among the several important concerns whose consideration the student, living in Continental capitals, had unconsciously deferred till he should have return-

ed to his native country, on the completion of his education. But he had not lived apart from womankind. On the contrary, there were ladies in Vienna and Paris who had admitted him to their intimacy, and would not have responded coldly had he asked them to give him more than their friendship. But his knowledge of the gentler sex, in so far as it was the result of experience and personal observation, was altogether gained from the study of gentlewomen. It is not wonderful, therefore, that he understood Lottie, and saw precisely how to treat her, though his domestic nurture had been unlike that of young men, whose surest knowledge and finest perceptions of the feminine character are due to the influence of their mothers and sisters.

He was right in thinking that he had not gone too far with Lottie, while they stood together in the moonlight near the ha-ha. He had not fully revealed his love to her. He had almost displayed the secret of his heart, and had alarmed her with a suspicion that his feeling for her was something warmer than friendship, and might become love. But the alarm was short-lived, and the suspicion too faint to be more than a step toward knowledge. Had he on that night retired from the drama of her life, he would have left her heart-whole, and she might never have learned her conquest of his affections. For a few days she would have been unconsciously saddened by his disappearance; for several weeks she would have missed the enlivening influence of his thought and presence; for months she would occasionally have remembered him as a congenial companion, with whom she had spent many hours of serene enjoyment. But she would not have pined for him, as a forsaken girl pines for the absent face which used to smile upon her, and which she can not banish from her memory at the instigation of resentment or the command of pride. She would have known nothing of unsatisfied desire, or of the anguish that springs from blighted hopes.

To the readers who are asked to believe this, it must be admitted that Lottie differed in some important respects from a considerable proportion, perhaps from the majority, of guileless and inexperienced English girls. Many a girl's heart has been wrung, and embittered for life, by the careless utterance of a far less explicit declaration of love than the intimation Albert had given Lottie of his passion for her. And many a masculine flirt—the most contemptible and barbarous of all liars—after planting the seeds of ineradicable sorrow in the heart of a recently liberated school-girl by whispering in her ear some less forcible expression of devotion, has gone on his way of selfish vanity, cherishing the memory of her joyous blush as one of his choicest triumphs, and chuckling over the egregious simplicity of the pretty little fool, who was so ignorant of the world as to mistake him for an honorable gentleman. Some of the scoundrels who thus find their congenial pas-

time in lying away the peace of mind of womanly children, and torturing their victims' simple hearts with falsehoods uttered in cold blood, may be occasionally heard to recommend the penal lash for the shoulders of an unrefined criminal who, in a moment of heat, had struck his drunken and abusive wife with his fist.

But Lottie Darling was so constituted that she could listen, without concern or peril, to language which would quicken the imagination and fire the heart of many a maiden no less gentle and good. Though highly nervous (in the best sense of the term), she was at all ordinary times so completely the mistress of her own mind, and had her moral forces so perfectly in hand, that superficial observers were apt to imagine that she was unemotional, if not positively chargeable with coldness. It was only on rare occasions — such, for instance, as the occasion of the impulsive greeting which she accorded to her mother at the Owleybury railway station — that the depth and fervor of her feelings were exhibited to casual beholders. And these rare occasions were always times when some extraordinary and overpowering stimulus had been applied to her quickest and strongest feelings. She was not readily excited, though she possessed the mental activity, and generous nature, and fine sensitiveness that are usually associated with a dangerous, if not morbid, excitability. Her habitual mood was equanimity; and even at moments of sharp agitation she seldom lost the repose which was a distinguishing characteristic of her intellectual and moral nature. Had she been as liable, as many thoroughly good girls are, to suffer from the treacherous flatteries of a male flirt, she would not have rebuffed Albert so promptly and decidedly when he was on the point of making her an offer. It was consistent with her demeanor at so stirring a crisis that, with her imagination subservient to her excellent common sense, and with a mind habitually obedient to her will, she was less disposed to magnify the significance of his words than to charge herself with having misconstrued them, as soon as the agitation caused by them had begun to subside.

For some minutes, however, after Albert's departure, her alarm was distressing, and her conscience sorely troubled. On gaining her room, already lighted for her by Lady Darling's personal servant, she barred the door, and, sitting down, proceeded to "think it all over." What could he have meant? Had she attached excessive importance to a few careless words, a change of voice, a strong pressure of his hand? These were the questions which she put to herself again and again, as tremor followed tremor from her head to her feet, and blush followed blush over her face. He had called himself a thief, said that he wanted to steal her, and, while holding her hand with a vehement pressure, had almost called her "Lottie Darling." How had her hand come into his hand? And why had he spoken in that imploringly tender voice? When she had put each of these questions to

herself about half a hundred times, she grew something calmer, though her hands and feet were still twitching with excitement.

She thought that it would help her to recover her equanimity if she found some employment for her hands. And as no employment was more obvious and suitable for them at so late an hour than the labor of preparing their owner for rest, Lottie determined that she would make her toilet for the night, and go to bed. She could think the whole matter over in the dark; and perhaps, when the candles were out, and her head on her pillow, the affair would be less terrifying.

So Lottie assumed her dressing-gown, and, seating herself before her toilet-table, loosened the rich tresses of her brown hair, and with exemplary attentiveness to what she was doing made herself ready for her bed. The exertion quieted her. And she was still further soothed by her religious exercises. According to her wont, she read a chapter in the New Testament, and said her prayers.

Her head had not been five minutes on the pillow when she found it easy to persuade herself that she had not had sufficient grounds for her recent alarm. After all, Mr. Albert had said nothing but what he might have said jestingly, and what, of course, she was bound to believe him to have said jestingly. Conrad's barking had reminded him of the cruel watchdog that belonged to Molly Bawn's papa, and, playing with the thought thus put into his head, he had said that he would steal her, and be transported for it. He had done nothing more, said nothing more, than young men in novels and elsewhere were continually doing and saying, out of pure lightness of heart, and with no serious meaning, to the girls of their acquaintance.

For a few minutes it was very comforting to Lottie to think all this. But ere long the very comfort thrust a spear into her self-respect that caused her to utter a cry of pain. If he had only been playing with innocent gayety, what an egregious and contemptible little simpleton she had been to misconstrue his pleasantry, and force upon it a significance which a girl should be very slow to attach to the light-hearted utterances of a young man! Yet worse, she had allowed him to see her mistake! She had permitted him to see that she had put the erroneous construction on his words and behavior, and had imagined him to be making love to her when no thought of love was in his heart. And far, far worse than all, she had punished him for the crime of which he had not been guilty, and behaved to him with a rudeness that must have appeared to him to be inexpressibly ridiculous and—and—indelicate. How he must pity her! and despise her! As this view of her behavior, and Mr. Albert's necessary estimate of it, occurred to poor Lottie, she covered her face with her hands, so that the very darkness might not see her blushes, and sobbed passionately under the anguish of

self-scorn, and her agonizing imaginations of Albert's contempt for her.

There is no self-accusation more afflicting to a sensitive and thoroughly good girl, who is absolutely incapable of ungentle thought or indecorous act, than a charge of indelicacy preferred against herself by her own conscience; and nothing can heighten the anguish of such a charge more cruelly than the fancy that her sin has been perpetrated against a man whom she respects, and that in consequence of her misbehavior she has become the object of his pitiful disdain, as well as the mark of her own scorn. Lottie would have writhed and wept under a consciousness of having perpetrated an indelicacy of which none save herself knew; but the thought that her unmaidenly offense had been committed against Albert, and that her professor was aware of it, and compassionately despising her for it, was unendurably humiliating. How should she ever recover her own self-respect? What could she do to regain his good opinion? How should she find courage to meet him at the butts in the morning?

Anyhow, since it was impossible for her to apologize to him for her misconduct, or to mitigate his displeasure at it by any form of words that would not magnify its enormity in his eyes and print it more deeply in his memory, she would by a strenuous effort demean herself toward him so that nothing in her deportment should aggravate her fault, or remind him of the embarrassment which had risen between them. To atone for the rudeness with which she had repelled him, she would greet him in the morning with rather more than her usual cordiality; and then she would do her very best to behave as though she were quite unconscious that any thing had occurred to disturb their friendship.

Albert's happy heart would have pulsed still more lightly had any feathered gossip whispered in his ear how anxious Lottie was to win his good opinion, and how glad she would be to know that he regarded her favorably. But, had he at the same time been informed of the pain which had brought her to a state of mind so accordant with his wishes, he would have thought his advantage purchased at far too high a price.

The event scarcely justified Lady Darling's prediction that her child would pass half the night in tears. The girl's grief was less obstinate than violent. She wept copiously for the greater part of an hour; and then the grand soother of the afflicted, who is wont to comfort the most forlorn of wretches for several out of every twenty-four hours, took her to his merciful arms, and closed her wet eyelids in profoundest slumber.

When Lady Darling and Lottie met Albert again at the butts, he saw no sign of recent trouble in the girl's serene face. Her sorrow had not endured for the night, and contentment covered her in the morning. That she

had forgiven him for his precipitate and too demonstrative behavior on the previous evening, he was assured by the frankness and hearty warmth with which she responded to his greeting. So they sent their arrows to and fro, shooting darkly, and gossiping innocently about the Owleybury Toxophilites and their chances of success on the thirty-first, as though no night-jar had ever lured them to the border of the ha-ha, and Conrad had never barked at the thief. Albert enjoyed the morning too much not to regret that an appointment with his father prevented him from staying to luncheon at Arleigh. As for Lottie, her mind was so agreeably relieved of an oppressive misapprehension by Albert's easily courteous bearing toward her, that she returned with her mother from the butts in elated spirits. It was clear to her that she had been frightening herself about nothing, and that Mr. Albert, instead of having put the true and worst possible construction on her conduct, had only thought that she had asked him rather stiffly to lead her back to the drawing-room. It was a gladness to her to be assured that he had never even hinted love for her. It was a far greater joy to know that he had not observed the foolishness of which she was so unutterably ashamed.

It is thus that a maiden, fresh from governesses and the school-room, may breathe an atmosphere surcharged with love and chivalric admiration for her, and not discover her power over her companions, or suspect the source and nature of the new joys which gladden her. It is thus that she may live under the gaze of adorative eyes, and never catch the meaning of their glances, or the purport of the homage which is rendered to her at every turn, until the moment comes when her worshiper snatches her hand, and implores hotly, "Oh! be mine wholly and forever, for I am yours already and irrevocably!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOTTIE SEES THE WIND.

THERE was sensation in the committee-room of the Owleybury Toxophilites when Albert, on the afternoon of the 27th of August, appeared before the ladies and gentlemen of the committee, and requested Captain Sackville, the club's honorary secretary, to enter his name in the list of competitors for the silver-tipped bow. Twirling one of his black, leech-like mustaches, and turning his eyes upward from the papers on his official desk, the captain remarked,

"By all means; but you don't shoot, do you?—at least, you have never shot with us; and on the evening of your election you told us that you had never pulled a bow."

"I have been at work since then," replied the new member; "and I will even venture to compete with so consummate a marksman as Captain Sackville."

"Ah! you have been practicing at Earl's

Court privately?" suggested the secretary, who had been betting heavily on his own chance in the approaching tournament, and did not like this unexpected appearance of a competitor who had never exhibited his skill to the club.

"I have been practicing," replied Albert, without revealing to his hearers the scene of his preparations for the conflict. "Perhaps I overrate my proficiency," he added, with a bow to the ladies of the committee, who were delighted at the incident which had given a shock to their secretary's self-confidence; "but I shall enter the lists with the modesty appropriate to a novice."

"We shall watch you," said Carry Hillsborough, who, without being a man-hunter of Miss Marsh's impudent type, was on the lookout for a white slave, and concurred with Tiny in thinking that the heir of Earl's Court and the Hammerhampton Bank was just then the most eligible young bachelor of the neighborhood—"we shall watch you with the intensest interest; for you will be our mysterious knight, who appears on the ground with his visor down, and a shield innocent of device."

"In being an object of interest to Miss Hillsborough for a few minutes, I shall be truly fortunate," Albert returned, gallantly, "and have a sufficient reward for my daring, even though she should accuse me of presumption when my poor prowess is exhibited to her."

If the excitement of ladies in council was great on hearing Albert enter himself for the grand prize of the male Toxophilites, their agitation at his next announcement was far stronger and more apparent.

Insolent with her three years' success, and trembling for the endurance of her supremacy, Flo Henderson uttered a little cry of surprise. She could not believe her ears. And Lady Rossiter—no relation to the inventor of the hair dye, but the wife of Baron Rossiter, of the Peerage of Ireland, and Coome Castle, county of Wicklow—put her astonishment and incredulity in words, and gained a courteous assurance that the herald of strange tidings acted on sufficient authority. No, there was no mistake either as to the name of the lady or as to her purpose. Miss Darling, of Arleigh Manor, had resolved to make her *début* at "The Toxophilites" on the occasion of the approaching tournament, and to do her best to win the jeweled quiver. She had authorized Mr. Guerdon to beg the committee to put her in the list of the fair competitors. As the Perpetual President of the Ladies' Committee, Lady Rossiter expressed the satisfaction with which she complied with Miss Darling's wish.

Ere the day had closed, the news was known to every Toxophilite of the neighborhood. Captain Sackville scented mischief, and prudently modified the scheme of "his book," so that, in case he missed the bow, he should not also lose an inconveniently large sum of money. Miss Henderson was seized with a panic which foreboded her failure on the day of trial. She de-

clared that the whole affair was unaccountable, and in her heart stigmatized it as underhand. She abhorred secrecy, and darkness, and covert practice. It was true that Miss Darling had never declared herself inexperienced in archery. But though she had appeared at Beech Court, Abbess Court, and half a score of other courts at archery parties, she had always avoided the butts, and spent her time among the flower-beds. To entreaties that she would take a bow, and make a trial of the pastime, her evasive form of answer had been, "No, thank you; I won't make a trial to-day." The girl, Miss Henderson admitted, had not fibbed positively; but her conduct had been unendurably sly and deceitful. She had fibbed by implication; and, in her detestation of underhand ways, Florence insisted to herself that fibbing by implication was the most crafty and treacherous kind of deceit of which a girl could be guilty. Of course, the covert girl had been practicing. But where? There were no butts at Arleigh. If Lottie Darling were not a skillful marks-woman, bent on carrying off the quiver by a surprise, why had she been "so dark?"

On receiving the intelligence which had roused Florence to a fever of uncharitableness, Christina Marsh, with a man-hunter's quickness of perception and suspicious cleverness, saw the whole position and plot. Tiny had called on the Darlings that very afternoon, and while walking with Lottie in the Arleigh Gardens, had caught a sight of the butts. In answer to her exclamation of surprise at the presence of the targets, Lottie had remarked coolly, "Oh yes; they have been there for some weeks now, and I have been practicing for my *début* at Owleybury. I think I am getting on satisfactorily." Tiny remembered that the sly little puss had not whispered a word of her intention to shoot for the quiver, though she must have already commissioned Albert to enter her for the contest. Worse still, the secretive girl had not spoken a syllable about Albert, who, it was clear as daylight to Tiny, had been using the Arleigh butts as his habitual practicing ground. Throughout the weeks which had afforded the man-hunter barely six opportunities for the accomplishment of designs on the heir of Earl's Court, Mr. Albert Guerdon had, of course, been a daily visitor at Arleigh, shooting away at Lottie and the targets at the same time. Tiny was enlightened and amazed. She was also very much annoyed. Her chance of catching Albert was gone, since he had made himself Lottie's ally under circumstances that could not fail to put him in love with her. It was mortifying!

For ten minutes Tiny could have cried with chagrin. She was not in love with Albert; but he was so precisely the animal for which she had been looking that it pained her acutely to see that so eligible a white slave would not fall to her possession. But, in spite of her levity and worldliness, Tiny had some good qualities. Spitefulness certainly was not one

of her faults. Even in the first smart of her vexation, she never suspected Lottie of having lured Albert to her side by any of the unmailed artifices which Christina herself would not have hesitated to employ for his capture. Lottie had been sly and odiously reticent about the butts and the shooting, and for those faults Miss Marsh resolved to punish her appropriately ere forgiving her generously. But Tiny was not more sure that her friend had "caught" Albert than sure that he had been "caught" by an undesigning charmer. "Ah!" she thought, with a sigh, "it does happen so sometimes! The biggest fish of the river, after passing the flies of the wariest anglers, swallows the unbaited hook that was not thrown out for him. How furious the Hillsboroughs and all the expert fishers will be when they learn that a mere child, who was a school-girl yesterday, has taken the prize from them unintentionally! *They* won't credit her with innocence of design. They'll pull her to pieces! What fun it will be to hear Flo Henderson's outpourings of virtuous indignation! Well, they may vent their disappointment in smart speeches, and I won't stop them, if they don't go too far. But if they exceed the limits of legitimate malice—the malice which any Christian girl may feel for a provokingly fortunate friend—I will check them up sharply, and give Florence Henderson a lesson in her own virtuously indignant art. For Lottie is a good girl. Ah, me! I wish I were like her. Perhaps I should have been less unlike her if my mother had lived, or if I had been sent to Miss Constantine's school."

Whereupon the girl, who had not shed a tear of vexation at her mishap in man-hunting, became tearful at the thought of how much better she might have been had her training been better. With all her amiability, Lottie could judge a friend too severely. In spite of her faults, Tiny Marsh was not quite "such a sad mistake" as Lottie imagined her.

The Owleybury Toxophilites, who were curious to ascertain how much Lottie and Albert knew, and could do, in the way of archery, had not to wait long for the gratification of their curiosity.

The thirty-first was precisely the kind of day which most of the Toxophilites desired it to be, and which the weather prophets of all the almanacs of the year declared it would not be. Five-and-twenty years since one always had considerate usage from the weather, which nowadays will persist in raining, or sending us a cold wind from the east, whenever we have made arrangements to lie out on the grass, and lunch off Champagne and lobster patties in the open air. The sun shone from a cloudless blue sky, and the breeze in the forenoon, without being strong or irregular enough to give the archers more than a little pleasantly manageable difficulty, came up from the south-west with gladdening music and coolness on the thirty-first. And never had the paddock of the Owleybury bowyers appeared to greater

advantage than on that day. The elms beneath which the luncheon marquee had been pitched were in the perfection of their beauty, and the spaces of the meadow in which the loitering spectators of the contest were permitted to promenade and listen to the music of a military band wore an aspect of picturesque animation.

The men shot in the morning, the ladies in the afternoon, when their cavaliers, having found out who was their best man, had drunk his health in Champagne. Let it be told in a line that their captain on this occasion was Albert. The fighting was between him and Captain Sackville, who shot well enough to put their competitors clean out of the betting before the clock of Owleybury Cathedral struck twelve. And ere the horn sounded for luncheon, at the close of the first part of the day's proceedings, Albert had come out the conqueror by seven marks.

Before luncheon there were three men on the ground to every lady. But after the repast the show of ladies increased with every successive ten minutes, until the wearers of flowing silks, and light muslins, and gossamer bonnets were in a strong majority. Carriage after carriage drove into the meadow, and added to the number of matrons and girls. Mrs. Blindhurst and the clerical ladies from the Close were present in full force, and Lady Rossiter, who had hoped that it would devolve on her to present the prizes to the winners at the end of the day, was not a little disappointed to see the Countess of Slumberbridge drive her pair of white ponies into the field. In the absence of the Countess, Lady Rossiter was a very great personage at the gatherings of the neighborhood; but she could only claim a subordinate place in the social foreground when the mistress of Castle Coosie came forth to smile upon her neighbors. Lottie arrived on the ground with her mamma, barely in time to take her place with eleven other fair competitors. Excitement had given her face just the right amount of additional color, and a certain animating piquancy of expression which never brightened it at times of ordinary composure. Surveying the elegant, fine-featured girl for the first time, Lady Slumberbridge was so delighted with her appearance that she determined *not* to invite her to Coosie Castle. Viscount Snoring, the heir-apparent of the Slumberbridge Earldom, was still unmarried; and he had not yet promised to wed the woman whom his mamma had wooed for him.

For the first six rounds, the shooting of the twelve contentents was so even that the scores afforded no strong indication of the result of the contest. It was not till rivalry, and the exhaustion consequent on several efforts, had begun to affect the steadiness of small wrists and the action of delicate fingers, that some of the markswomen failed to do themselves justice; but, when a nervous girl had made a wild or imperfectly successful shot, the conscious-

ness of misadventure lessened her confidence, diminished her self-possession, and told against her in several ways.

Albert for a while watched Lottie with keen anxiety. His only fear for her was that the novelty of her position, and the knowledge of the nice vigilance with which her display of prowess was regarded, would agitate her unduly at the outset of the game. If panic seized her in the earlier rounds, she was not likely to recover herself; but, if she escaped stage-fever at the commencement of the proceedings, she would shoot with coolness and precision to the last. She was in perfect training and "form," her wrists and fingers having been raised to admirable strength by assiduous practice. But how would she endure at first the gaze of hundreds of critical observers, whose curiosity respecting her proficiency had been whetted by the secrecy of her preparations? As he put this question to himself, Albert regretted that he had not allowed her to practice once or twice with the Club, in order that she might accustom herself to the distraction of public shooting before the grand trial. To his great relief, he saw that her self-possession did not desert her. Her first arrow made an inner ring; her second caught the outer ring on the inner side; her third hit the bull's-eye; of all her first six shafts no one missed the target.

That would do. The danger of an attack of stage fever was over. Albert knew that her nerve would not fail her, and that her shooting would improve with every turn. As the fair archers, after each "turn," walked with stately deliberateness the length of the butts, to identify and recover their arrows, and take up positions for the next "turn," Albert never failed to approach Lottie, and give her a word of encouraging praise. He was her bottle-holder; but she paid him scarcely any attention during the walkings to and fro. Once he said,

"There is a large number of people here."

"Is there?" she replied, without raising her eyes from the sward. "I did not know it. I do not see the spectators; and I will not even think about them. I see nothing but my bow and arrow, the distance between me and the target, and the place in the target to which I try to send my shaft." Three seconds later she added, with a smile, "Yes, I see something else—I see the wind. It sha'n't play me a mischievous trick." The girl's whole mind was in her work.

When the shooting at measured distances was over, Lottie and Flo Henderson were beyond the reach of their competitors; but the two favorites (for Lottie's achievements had made her a "favorite") were close together in the score. Only three marks separated them; but this slight difference in the two scores was in Flo Henderson's favor. So far Florence had beaten Lottie; but Albert was hopeful that Lottie would put herself ahead of Flo in the final shootings, made at irregular and unmeasured distances selected on the mo-

ment by the marshal of the competitors. Miss Henderson the young man knew to be at her best when she shot by rule under known conditions, whereas Lottie was greatest when she had to rely on her fine perception of distances, and her tact in dealing with disturbing influences. Miss Henderson was the mechanical archer, excellently sure so long as she was carrying out instructions; but Lottie was the marks-woman of genius, feeling, resource. Fortunately for the younger lady, "the twelve" were no sooner marched out by Lady Rossiter, who discharged the functions of marshal, than the south-west wind rose considerably, as it is apt to do toward evening. As the light breeze sprang up, Albert knew that it was all over with Florence Henderson, who could combat by rule the force of a steady wind, but could never catch the humors, and adapt herself sympathetically to the frolicsome caprices of the wanton air. At this moment each of the twelve girls had to make twelve shots. Ten of the quivered damsels shot away their final shafts carelessly, for mere form's sake, knowing that they, for all practical purposes, were out of the game. But it was otherwise with the two favorites. Turning pale as the wind rose (for she saw her danger), Flo let go her string at the word of command, having aimed without allowing for the fitfulness of the breeze. As the shaft flew from her string, there was a sudden lull, and the arrow went a yard wide of the target. At the same moment Lottie, who saw the breeze stop at the last fraction of the last instant of her aiming time, sent her whizzing shaft clean into the bull's-eye with a smart tap. Again and again, in their last twelve shots, Florence failed, and Lottie won in the same way. Failure irritated Miss Henderson, while success exhilarated Lottie, and quickened her perceptions. The girl could see the wind; she knew all about it; for a moment in her heart she defied it. Of Flo's last twelve arrows, seven missed the target, and five barely managed to fix themselves on its border. Of Lottie's final dozen shafts not one missed the target, and five were bull's-eyes. As the girl made her last shot and bull's-eye, a round of cheers went up from the spectators, who followed up their vocal applause with vehement hand-clapping.

"How provoking it was of the wind!" the defeated favorite ejaculated, pitching her bow to her brother. "The south-west wind always rises in this way toward the evening. The ladies ought to have shot in the morning."

"It was extremely provoking for you, Flo!" said Lottie, who overheard the petulant speech, and hastened with her sweetest smile and most cooing voice to alleviate the anguish of the vanquished, "and it was very, very fortunate for me. You are much the better shot when the air is quiet; and I shoot my best in a light breeze. It was the accident of the weather that gave me the victory; and I really feel as though I had taken a mean advantage of you

in making the most of my special gift of seeing the wind."

Miss Henderson's annoyance was mitigated by this pretty speech. Moreover, her chagrin did not blind her to the excellence, discretion, and skill which her victor had displayed. Like a true Toxophilite, she admired the superior force that had defeated her; and she had enough generosity and good taste to say so.

"You were fortunate to have the conditions which baffled me, while they only gave you an opportunity for displaying your wonderful cleverness," Flo replied; "but you have won no less fairly than brilliantly. You are the best shot in the club; and the quiver, Lottie, will suit your figure and style precisely."

"It is the first *first* prize that I have ever won," Lottie rejoined, with gleeful simplicity. "At school I never could carry off a *first* prize."

In another moment Lottie found herself the heroine of the club, the centre of a crowd of people who deafened her with congratulations, while they bantered her about the "darkness" of her preparations for success.

"Lottie, my darling," exclaimed Tiny Marsh, grasping the victor's hand, "you deserve the prize. Your shooting was superb—it raised archery to the level of the high arts. None but a girl of genius could have fought the wind so cunningly. Moreover"—and here the man-hunter lowered her voice, as she made ready to put a sting into Lottie's ear—"your training does credit to your teacher!"

The malicious significance of the tone in which Tiny spoke those concluding words was altogether lost on Lottie, who staggered and completely routed her assailant by the delicious frankness and simplicity of her reply.

With the gratefulness of a warm-hearted girl fresh from school, Lottie said, in a voice audible to half a score of by-standers:

"I am so glad to hear you say so. Mr. Guerdon has been so very good to me! He has come over to Arleigh, morning after morning, to train me. My success is all due to him. Oh, Mr. Albert!" she cried, gleefully, as her professor came through the throng, "let us shake hands and congratulate each on our common triumph. I was this moment telling Christina that I have to thank you for my good fortune. How very, very kind you have been to give me so much of your time!"

"My goodness," replied Albert, with a laugh and a blush on his cheeks, as he playfully emphasized the word, "has been fully repaid, Miss Darling. You have rewarded me by winning the quiver, and now you are going to make me famous. I have done good by stealth, and blush to find it fame!"

When Lady Slumberbridge, ten minutes later, gave Lottie the prize, with an appropriate speech, she was so taken with the girl's beauty that she begged her to give her a kiss.

A comely dame, with a noble profile and presence, though she was slightly oppressed by the weight of her personal attractions, as ladies

of high degree are apt to be when they have passed the middle line of life's middle term, the countess overflowed with graciousness to Judge Darling's daughter.

"Do kiss me, dear," she said, good-naturedly. "I like to be kissed by pretty girls. The time was, Miss Darling, when my face was almost as lovely as yours, and the belt of that quiver would have encircled my waist."

Flattering the benign peerness by the obvious sincerity of her words, Lottie observed, when she had put two light kisses on the lady's lips, "You must have been a charming girl."

Whereupon Lady Slumberbridge laughed pleasantly at her flatterer, and, with an amiable insolence which her high position and obvious kindness rendered quite inoffensive, rejoined:

"And you *are* a charming girl. You must come and stay with me, my dear, at Castle Coosie, as soon as my son is engaged. You mayn't come sooner, or he'll be falling in love with you, and that would never do."

"Then I hope, Lady Slumberbridge," returned Lottie, who was vastly tickled by the great lady's condescension and droll candor, "that he will be engaged before the end of next month."

A quarter of an hour later, Lottie, the triumphant, was on her way back to Arleigh, sitting bodkin on the low seat of the yellow chariot, between her papa and mamma, with her bow in her hand, and her jeweled quiver on her knees. "I shall keep this grand thing as a trophy," she said to her mamma, as they neared the manor-house, "and continue to use the green-and-gold sheath which Mr. Albert gave me."

CHAPTER XIX.

ALBERT'S PRAYER AND LOTTIE'S ANSWER.

THE next day being the first of September, from early dawn until dusk the valley of the Luce resounded with the frequent reverberations of guns; and many partridges fell beneath the deadly aim of sportsmen, who returned to their homes in the afternoon laden with spoil, and pleasantly fatigued with walking over turnips and stubbles.

It was a day of dinner-parties in the southwest corner of Boringdonshire; and Sir James and Lady Darling drove to a dinner, eight miles from Arleigh, where the guests were regaled with partridges, which, though of course they had been alive in the morning, came to table with the flavor of full keeping, as though they had been hanging in the larder by their legs for a week or more. Lottie had received an invitation to this same dinner. But, after consultation with her daughter, Lady Darling had on good grounds decided that it would be better for the girl to remain at home. The mother was of opinion that an excess of gayety was bad for all young people, and that a particular young person ought not to follow up the excite-

ments of the archery tournament with a grand dinner and "late hours" on the next day. It was the easier for Lottie to concur in this view, as she was not yet of an age to enjoy thoroughly the chief festivity of the aging and the aged, though she fully appreciated the dignity of being a come-out young lady, who was entitled to participate in the stateliest banquets of her elders. Whether Lady Darling had any reason, besides those already mentioned, for declining the invitation for her daughter, it is the business of this chapter to show.

As it was no longer needful for her to practice at the butts, or likely that Albert would visit the promontory between breakfast and luncheon, Lottie spent the morning quietly at home, writing to one or two of the several "old Constantines" whom her conscience pricked her for having treated with epistolary neglect since her return from Brighton. At midday she dined, when papa and mamma had their luncheon; and then she whiled away the afternoon with her music and a book, in the default of callers, and in the absence of her parents, who, wishing to pay some visits of ceremony on the way to the dinner, left home soon after their luncheon. Her groom being required to play the part of coachman on the box of the yellow chariot, she could not have taken a canter on "Clifton," even if the excessive heat of the day had not indisposed her for exercise on the saddle. So she spent the afternoon by herself; and after her wont she enjoyed the solitariness, which afforded her an opportunity for reflecting how little she had done of late to carry out the excellent scheme for pursuing her graver studies with which she had started on her homeward journey from Hanover Square. Like most girls when they are leaving school, Lottie, on saying good-bye to Brighton, was deeply impressed with a sense of her duties to her intellect, and had formed virtuous resolutions for enlarging her knowledge of history and the sciences.

The time, spent thus wholesomely in regretting omissions of duty, and in reforming broken resolutions, was followed by tea and thick bread-and-butter. Lottie had given special directions concerning the thickness of the slices, in her determination to be once again a school-girl all by herself; and in the execution of this childish piece of "make-believe," she enjoyed herself prodigiously.

The sun having fallen and the heat subsided, when the bread-and-butter had vanished, Lottie left the house, and strolled about the upper garden, humming stray snatches of familiar songs, and revolving half a hundred happy thoughts, as she went the round of the flower-beds, which were much less gaudy on this first of September than they had been ten weeks earlier, but still were bright with petunias and verbenas, as every garden ought to be in early autumn after a genial summer. The statelier roses had shed their honors, and the show of geraniums was meagre; but their brilliant lights had

been replaced with the milder glow of asters and chrysanthemums. Having stood for a few minutes near the ha-ha, listening in vain for the night-jar, Lottie went round to "the nook," her favorite resting-place in all the grounds.

A circular patch of lawn, hedged by evergreens and garnished with slender sprays of weeping birch, this secluded corner had in the middle of its green plot a marble tank for gold-fish, and a rustic chair on which Lottie had passed some happy hours with one of Tennyson's volumes in her hand.

Tranquil at all times, the water of this tiny pool seemed unusually still to Lottie, as she examined the broad leaves of a water-lily that lay extended on its surface, and saw the crimson forms of the toy fish lying lazily in its mid-depth. The reflections from the mirror were strangely vivid, and Lottie, trained at Hanover Square to regard her semblance in looking-glasses, gazed pensively at herself, standing there in loneliness. As she did so, the solitariness of her position occurred to her. It seemed to her that her father and mother had left her for a long journey and time, instead of a few miles and hours; and it suddenly struck the girl, who had never known weariness of herself, that it would be sad to live without the sympathy of companions, even in so delightful a spot as Arleigh. And then the thought rose that the parents, whom she loved so entirely and strongly, would perhaps one day pass away, and leave her in enduring solitude. In later days it seemed to her very strange that this mournful reflection was still distressing her, when she saw Albert's face and form on the same mirror that reflected her own features. It seemed that his eyes were looking into her countenance.

With a cry and a start she raised her glance, and saw Albert before her.

"Don't be frightened," he said. "Do pardon me for alarming you."

"I am not frightened; I am only startled for an instant. I did not hear your step, and you came upon me just as I was thinking it was not well for me to be alone. The thought had saddened me; and my friends should only see me at my happiest."

"I could not have come more opportunely," he replied, advancing to her and gazing with prayerful eyes into the light that burned between her long black lashes; "for I am here, Lottie, to ask you to save me from the weariness of loneliness, and to let me be your companion forever."

For ten seconds her wondering expression seemed to indicate that she could not catch the full meaning of his words.

"Lottie," he entreated, "do tell me that I am not asking too much."

The day was near when they laughed merrily at the first words that Lottie uttered in response to this burning prayer, after she had caught the purport of his supplication, and at the same moment, reverting to his behavior on

a previous evening, had seen that her first judgment of it had not been faulty.

"Then I was right," she said, "and it is as I thought."

Before ten days had passed, Albert accused Lottie of having spoken these words in a tone of compassionate reproachfulness, a tone implying that she had tried to think better of him, and to her grief found herself compelled to think the worst. But, though she admitted that she might in her first surprise have made some such silly speech, she declared that the compassionately reproachful tone was the mere fiction of his malicious fancy.

"Yes, yes," Albert answered, seeing how the present had brought the past to Lottie's mind; "the other night I was on the point of telling you my hope, and imploring you to give it encouragement, when your look of displeasure caused me to forbear. You are *not* angry with me now?"

"No, no; and I was scarcely at all angry then."

"Thank you for that," ejaculated Albert, taking her right hand, and observing with satisfaction that she showed no wish to withdraw it. "But though you are not displeased with me, you have not said 'yes.' Lottie, my own dear girl, do promise to love me."

"Go away now, Albert," the girl said, kindly, blushing as she addressed him so familiarly, "you may not remain here this evening, for mamma is not at home. Don't think me unkind. Leave me alone till to-morrow."

"I knew that your father and mother were away from Arleigh. Lady Darling told me that you would be alone—that I might come to you, to tell you of my love."

"Then mamma knows?"

"She sanctions my visit and my entreaty. I may not say that she wishes you to be mine, for she told me that she would not influence you in any way. But she has been so good to me, in sympathizing with me, and in arranging for me to see you this evening, that I am sure she will be glad to hear you have given me the promise which I entreat you to make."

While these words were being spoken, Lottie, without taking her hand from Albert's grasp, had withdrawn a few paces from the marble tank in the direction of the rustic seat. Seeing her purpose, Albert led her to the chair, and allowed her a minute of silence in which to recover her composure.

In that minute she saw the full significance of the feelings with which he had inspired her, and by which her conduct to him in a hundred trivial matters had been determined for several weeks. She knew that her captain had come to claim her, and her heart went forth to bless him.

Then, bending over her, Albert said, with a vehemence which was all the more mysteriously impressive because the voice which clothed his fervent words was irresistibly gentle,

"I know you love me, Lottie; and you know

you love me. Then do, in mercy to me, find courage to say that you will be mine."

"Five minutes ago, Albert," she said, slowly and clearly, raising from the depths of a pure soul her own sacred recognition of her recently discovered love, and placing it with pathetic solemnity on the words whereby she conveyed herself to her suitor—"five minutes ago I did not know I loved you. But I *do* love you, and I see that my love for you is no new thing, but the flower of a plant which you placed in my heart, and have been feeding with smiles and kindness. Oh, Albert, I may not be selfish in my happiness! May my love be the joy to you that your love is to me!"

As she spoke thus thankfully and seriously, she looked up into his face, with a glowing splendor in her large blue eyes that declared more forcibly than her language how completely she surrendered herself to him. But when he bent down, and put his lips upon her white forehead, her eyes fell, and crimson joy sprang to the face which she turned toward the ground.

Then, seating himself by her side, and putting his right arm round her little waist, Albert drew her toward him, and poured into her ear streams of sacred speech, which it would be a kind of profanity to report upon a page penned for the amusement of readers in their hours of idleness. And Lottie's tongue was no less eloquent and musical. They received one another into the secret places of their hearts, so that each saw that a mere selfish happiness, living on sympathies bounded by their mutual love, would never satisfy the other. They would pass their years in joy; and they would express their gratitude for their own felicity, and for God's immeasurable goodness to them, by efforts for the benefit of those to whom fortune had been less bounteous.

The twilight was deepening into darkness ere Albert, rising from his seat, said,

"But, Lottie, I may stay no longer now, for I am here under conditions, put upon me by your mamma, and I must observe them."

"Were they very hard terms?" Lottie inquired, with an affectation of pitiful concern.

"I may not murmur at them, though they compel me to leave you now. Lady Darling told me that, if I could not find you in the garden, I might seek you in the house, and invite you to stroll with me in the grounds. But she enjoined me, under any circumstances, to leave you before it became dark."

"The terms were not very hard. I don't think, Albert, she was very cruel to you."

"The power to be unkind, Lottie, is not in your mother. She has been very good to me, and I love her very much—as much as your husband ought to love her. When you see her to-night, do tell her that I told you of her kindness to me."

Deferring their separation for a few more minutes, Lottie accompanied her lover to the boundary of the inner garden; and ere he went away for Earl's Court, she allowed him to put

another kiss on her cheek. Indeed, when she saw what the thief was after, she turned the round cheek a little upward, so that Albert's softly furred lips and chin might get at it easily. At present, however, she had no courage to return the endearment. But as they stood beside a standard rose, which placed directly under her eyes two twin buds growing from the same stalk, it occurred to her that she would not be treating Albert according to his desert if she dismissed him without any thing of the nature of a kiss. So she plucked one of the twin buds, and, having kissed it ostentatiously, put it with her own hands into a button-hole of his coat.

A minute more, and Albert had passed from her sight.

When she could no longer see him, Lottie returned slowly to the house; and she was on the point of crossing its threshold, when she suddenly changed her purpose, and retraced her steps to the rose-tree from which she had shortly before taken her last gift to Albert. Having robbed the standard of the remaining one of the twin buds, Lottie kissed it caressingly, and put it in the bosom folds of her dress. In thus taking one of her own flowers, and putting it on her own breast, Lottie felt a vague consciousness of clandestine misdemeanor. Before she plucked the bud, she looked round about her furtively and anxiously, to assure herself that no human eye was upon her; and when she was again on the point of entering her father's house, she checked a sudden impulse to throw away the stolen bud, by saying to herself,

"Nonsense, it is only a flower, and no one will know what it means."

Alone in the lighted drawing-room, Lottie spent the next two hours with her own thoughts. The fast, strong stream of life seemed to be carrying her onward very quickly. She had seen and done and felt so very much since she was "only a school-girl," that whole years seemed to lie between her and her old time at Brighton. In truth, not three months—barely ten weeks, to be accurate—had passed since she learned lessons and took "reprises" at Hanover Square; and already she had been loved, had fallen in love, and had promised some day or other to be some one's wife. Ten weeks! They must have been ten years. And yet every incident of her last hours at Brighton, and her subsequent life, was remembered by her distinctly, as trivial matters never are remembered when they have fallen under the mist of much time. She recalled Eugie Bridlemere's wild talk about brides and bridals in the "long room," and how, when the other girls had declared a preference for this or that kind of husband, she had only blushed, and committed the whole question to her mamma, and implored the girls to "let it be." All that Miss Constantine had said about the obligation of girls to be unselfish in their love affairs was remembered; every word of it recurred to Lottie, whose clear

retrospect enabled her to see how scores of incidents had helped her onward into her love of Albert. The "quite common persons" in the railway carriage had gossiped in her hearing about Albert, and the reasons which the Boringdonshire girls had for thinking well of him. She had not driven from the Owleybury station before she saw him, and heard her mother praise him. Then came her mamma's speeches, which had done so much to make marriage a familiar thought to her; and then followed Tiny Marsh's impudent boastings of her skill in man-hunting. And from the time when he first greeted her under the elms till only a few minutes since, when he kissed her forehead, Albert had been her daily companion, teaching her to love him, while all the time she had supposed herself to be regarding him as nothing more than an adult playmate. It was not wonderful that she had traveled far away from childish simplicity to womanly knowledge in those ten weeks.

When the clock pointed toward eleven, though she felt no inclination for slumber, Lottie retired for the night, in order that she might have a necessary interview with her mamma under the most agreeable circumstances, and also avoid a needless, and possibly embarrassing encounter with her papa, on that eventful night. So Lottie went to bed, having first left a sealed envelope in a place where she knew it would catch her mamma's eye immediately she re-entered the house. The epistle was brief, and to the point; it was also sufficiently explicit, though it had neither date nor signature. "Do come to me, dearest, to-night. He has been here, and I am so very happy." That was the whole of the letter.

Within two minutes of her receipt of this note, Lady Darling was in her child's room, and Lottie, sitting up in her bed, had thrown her arms round her mother's neck.

"Dear, dear mother," said the girl, "he has been here. He told me you had given him leave to come: and I told him all that he wanted me to tell him. I am so very happy, mother. I find that I have been loving him for days and weeks without knowing it. And the love, which sometimes separates while it joins, and tears asunder while it binds together, will not take me from you. Dearest, do say that you do not love me less because I love him."

If Lottie had managed to say all to him that Albert wanted her to say, Mary Darling was no less successful in giving Lottie all the assurances which were needful for the completion of the girl's happiness. When she left her child for the night, there were two unspeakably joyful women in the manor-house.

Trifling matters are apt to put themselves in the mind side by side with grand affairs; and as Lottie fell asleep she smiled to think how she had exulted not many hours before at her good fortune in carrying off the jeweled quiver—the first *first* prize that she had ever won. It seemed an age since her *début* in the archers'

paddock at Owleybury; and the winning of the quiver was so ridiculously trivial a matter for her to have been so delighted about it! The victory of that night had rendered all her other triumphs insignificant.

May we congratulate Lottie on her felicity without a misgiving? Do the teachings of this perplexing world justify us in feeling confident that her happiness will endure for a great while, and yield no fruit of sorrow? We say that grief endures for a night, and that joy comes in the morning; and our way of uttering the familiar words implies that woe is the parent of bliss. But does it not as often happen that joy perishes in a night, and that grief comes with the dawn? Are our delights less fleeting than our sorrows? Does not the gladness of an hour often give birth to wretchedness which ends only with the grave? The preacher's doctrine may be unpalatable to those who exult in unstable felicity, but it has consolation for those who droop and weep beneath woes which are no less vain than our sweetest vanities. The refrain of *vanitas vanitatum* may be mournful to the dwellers in life's sunny places, but it is cheerful music to those who inhabit the homes of sorrow, and are moving painfully onward through the valley of the shadow of death. Let not this chapter, however, conclude with lugubrious predictions for Lottie, of whose changeful fortunes much remains to be told. What will be, will be. For the present it is enough to know that she *is* happy, and that it really matters little whether people are joyful or wretched in this brief existence, whose pleasure and sorrows are alike transitory.

CHAPTER XX.

JOHN GUERDON HEARS ABOUT IT.

THE infirmities of age having disqualified him for the pursuit of partridges, and indeed for any manlier exercise than that of riding at an easy pace on his stout cob, John Guerdon spent the first of September in his bank parlor, doing the ornamental business of the firm, whose affairs had of late years fallen under the despotic control of Mr. Gimlett Scrivener. To ordinary clients the senior partner of Guerdon & Scrivener's Bank was a very great man. They were impressed profoundly by his white waistcoat and large nose, his silk pocket-handkerchief and air of benign condescension. The shrewder and stronger men of the Great Yard had, indeed, lost faith in his oracular utterances for many a day, and did not need to be told the name of the great man's master. But the commonalty of small tradesmen and petty speculators still stood in awe of him; and to console himself for his exclusion from the pastime of the day, John Guerdon, sitting in the large easy-chair of his private office, behaved with unusual pomposity to the persons

who approached him with requests that they might overdraw their accounts.

Not that Mr. Guerdon had altogether dropped out of the circles of sportsmen. He had taken out a shooting license, and he meant, ere many days had passed, to invite some of his neighbors to kill the Earl's Court partridges, while he watched their proceedings from the back of his pony, and occasionally fired a barrel in the direction indicated by a game-keeper, at objects which his dim vision could not perfectly see. In courteous remembrance of old times, and in consideration of their privilege of walking over his stubbles, two or three of his younger and more stalwart comrades had, also, asked him to "go out with them on the first." But John Guerdon, fully alive to his physical failings, had prudently declined their invitations, and arranged to dine at the Hammerhampton club with his old chum, Ned Barlow.

One of the Beech Court Barlows, and second cousin to the present squire, Edward Barlow, had a coal-mine, and shares in more than one thriving concern of the Hammerhampton district. Like all prosperous Englishmen of the stupid sort, who have some slight color of ancestral gentility, John Guerdon rendered excessive homage to blood; and he consequently valued his friend for being a Barlow of Beech Court even more than he respected him for being rich, and able to stow away his two bottles of port *per diem* without discomfort. Mr. Barlow also stood high in the banker's esteem as a rare teller of a good story. As Mr. Barlow's repartees and choicest anecdotes would suffer from repetition, and offend the taste of polite drawing-rooms, specimens of them shall not be given on this page. It is enough to say that they all possessed certain broad and pungent characteristics, which proved the gentleman to be "one of an old school" of humorists.

At the Hammerhampton club, John Guerdon and Ned Barlow were allowed to take liberties. The sole survivors of the original founders of the House, they were practically irremovable members of the committee, and had the cellar pretty well in their own hands. At least once in three weeks it was their custom to dine at the club in a little private room, and by excessive indulgence in port-wine preserve themselves in an interesting condition of chronic gout.

For more than a week John Guerdon had looked forward to meeting his boon-companion at the club for "a dinner and a set-to" on the first of September. But his pleasant anticipations were inadequately realized. For the friends had scarcely dispatched their soup and "bit of fish," when Ned Barlow began to banter the banker about Albert's assiduous attentions to Miss Darling of Arleigh. His eldest granddaughter having been one of the eleven ladies defeated by Lottie on the previous day, Mr. Barlow had heard the whole story of Miss Darling's victory at the butts, and of her grateful transference of the honors of her triumph to

the young man who had come over to Arleigh, morning after morning, to instruct her in the use of the bow. Of course the affair was common gossip in the neighborhood; but John Guerdon, though ranking as one of "the neighborhood" of Owleybury, had not heard any thing of his son's now notorious doings at Arleigh, when they were disclosed to him by Ned Barlow, with an abundance of jocular exaggeration.

As John Guerdon listened, he drank his wine faster, and his black eyebrows exhibited his excitement by ominous twitchings.

"Humph!" growled the nettled father, "the world appears to know much more of my boy's affairs than he condescends to tell me about them."

The topic being obviously offensive to his friend, it may appear strange to some readers that so "good a fellow" as old Ned Barlow did not replace it with a more agreeable subject. But it was the rule of "the old school," which Mr. Barlow adorned, to hit a man again, if he winced under a conversational thrust, and to show cleverness by striking him precisely on the point covered by the former blow. No talker could surpass Mr. Barlow in the rough play which, under the color of good-fellowship, accomplishes every thing that small spite delights to effect. And on the present occasion he excelled himself.

"You don't like the thought of such a match, eh, Guerdon?" inquired the tormentor.

"What match? I don't know any," responded the victim, twitching his black brows in answer to the stab.

"Well, old friend, of course there is not much money; but there is nothing else to be said against the young lady, who comes of a good stock; has been trained carefully, and is about as pretty a girl as can be found between this place and Brighton pier."

"I have not said any thing against the young lady; though I may not think overwell of her," growled the victim, "if she and her people have been throwing bait to catch my youngster, without consulting me."

"As to consulting you, John Guerdon," rejoined the old friend, with the malice of which only old friends are capable, "it does not strike me that Sir James Darling was bound to talk to you about the matter till you mentioned it to him. As the young man's father, it falls to you to open the discussion, if either of you should speak before you are spoken to by the young people themselves. For my part, I think that fathers can't say too little about their children's love affairs."

"Indeed! That may be good doctrine for a man whose children have pleased themselves in marrying, as well as in other matters," retorted John Guerdon, showing fight, as he pointed thus bluntly to his friend's domestic troubles. "But as my boy is my only child, and has been trained to respect his father, I expect to have a voice in his arrangements.

At least, if he does not allow me a word in them, he may not be surprised if I pull my purse strings tight."

"Anyhow, he is old enough to be his own master; and, if he has shown more good taste than prudence in running after Miss Darling, I don't see that Sir James is in fault. It is only reasonable to suppose that he thinks you able to take care of yourself without his assistance. Of course he never imagined that you were ignorant of Albert's daily visits to Arleigh."

"Who says the visits have been daily?"

"Every body. Bless you, my boy, all the women within ten miles of Owleybury are talking about the Arleigh butts and Miss Lottie's teacher."

"What may be said by chattering women is nothing to me," John Guerdon rejoined, hotly. "I'll hold my tongue till my son condescends to take me into his confidence. And in the mean time, Ned, I think we had better drink our wine, and leave his affairs alone. Anyhow, you needn't bother yourself about them. He isn't your son."

"I should wish he was," responded Mr. Barlow, who saw that he had gone rather too far in amusing himself at his old chum's expense, "if I hadn't sons enough of my own, for he is a very pleasant, gentleman-like youngster. There is not a likelier lad in our part of Boringdonshire."

Appeased by this tribute to his paternal pride, John Guerdon said,

"He is a good enough boy, and up to this point has never disappointed me in any thing. Shall we have a bottle of the 'yellow-seal,' to begin with after dinner?"

Dropping the disagreeable topic, Mr. Barlow, during the rest of the dinner, exerted himself to restore his friend to good humor; but, though John Guerdon's resentment against his boon-companion subsided, he could not relish the flavor of the "yellow-seal;" and when he had taken, without contentment, his full share of three bottles, he declined to join his comrade in drinking a fourth. The disturbing intelligence had decided him to have an explanation with Albert. Instead of sleeping at the bank, as he was wont to do after his club dinners, he would catch the last train for Owleybury, and drive from the cathedral down to Earl's Court in a fly. He should by that way reach his house before midnight; and, if his son were at home, he would speak to him before they went to rest. Old Ned Barlow pleaded cogently for a fourth bottle of "yellow-seal," but the banker was obstinate, and went off for the late train.

On the way to Owleybury, Mr. Guerdon decided on the course which he would take, under each of several contingencies. But, though he prepared himself for half a dozen possible positions, it never occurred to the father that Albert was already Miss Darling's accepted suitor. That his son had been too much at Arleigh Manor; that he was in danger of fixing his affections on the judge's daughter; that he had

even fallen in love with her—John Guerdon could believe. But that, in defiance of a paternal warning, so well principled a boy should have actually offered his hand to the young lady, was a thing too monstrous and incredible for the banker's unimaginative mind to place it among the possibilities of the case.

Had Albert been at home when his sire arrived at the door of his country house, it is probable that the two would have had a painful and stormy altercation; and that in the heats of discussion John Guerdon would either have conceived an implacable hostility against Lottie, or have given utterance to an intemperate speech which would have separated him from his son forever. It was fortunate for both of them that Albert was enjoying his recent triumph in solitude and the open air, at a distance of several miles from Earl's Court.

On hearing of his son's absence from the court, Mr. Guerdon grunted half a dozen times snappishly, and went off to bed, comforting himself with the reflection that to-morrow would afford him an opportunity for giving the boy "a bit of his mind."

CHAPTER XXI.

A ROARING CHAPTER.

AT all times a great and heavy sleeper, when he was not suffering from a paroxysm of the gout, John Guerdon did not wake early on the second of September; and when he at length entered his breakfast parlor, he found Albert in the act of finishing his morning meal. It was not their custom to wait for one another at breakfast. Each of the men had his separate tea-pot; and the son had been told expressly that, by delaying his own breakfast till his father should appear, he offered no mark of filial respect that was either required or desired from him. But entering the room in a quarrelsome humor, and entering no other pretext for adopting a tone of grievance, the banker, after nodding sulkily to his heir, said,

"Humph! then you have not had the civility to wait for me?"

Instead of arguing the case, and offering the obvious reply to the charge of incivility, Albert, who managed his father almost as cleverly as he had managed Lottie, replied, with conciliatory heartiness,

"I would have waited for you, sir, had I thought it probable that you would be down by this time. You came home from Hammerhampton so late last night that I gave you yet another hour for your bedroom."

Having received this dutiful speech in silence, John Guerdon relieved his very unusual irritability by assailing his man-servant. The man was told that the eggs were not so fresh as they ought to be, and that the tea was slop.

"Go and tell those people in the kitchen," the master exclaimed, setting the water an ex-

ample in the art of boiling over, "that, if they won't see that the water boils before they pour it on the leaves, they may look out for a master who has a liking for slops. Here, take the beastly stuff away, and bring me a pot that's fit to drink. Now be quick!"

Having thus petulantly dismissed the butler, who, after a lapse of three minutes, placed the same tea-pot and the same infusion of the Chinese leaf before his employer, John Guerdon unfolded a London paper of the previous evening, and proceeded to glance at its money article.

Thinking that it would be best for him to leave his father alone, and give him time to compose himself, Albert rose from his chair, and was walking to the door of the breakfast parlor, when he was arrested by his father saying,

"I am going to Hammerhampton by the twelve o'clock train, and I wish to have a word or two with you, after my breakfast, before I start."

"By all means, sir," returned Albert, looking at his watch. "It is now half-past nine; shall I meet you in the library at half-past ten?"

"Yes, that will do. No, make it a quarter of an hour earlier; for I might miss my train, and I may have a good deal to say to you. Be in the library at a quarter-past ten."

From his father's testiness, and the ominous twitching of his dark, beetling eyebrows, Albert saw that a storm was brewing for him, while the tea was brewing for his sire. It was clear to him that something of his recent doings at Arleigh had come to his father's ears; and that, when the storm burst, it would hurl at him an order to start at once for a certain villa on the Menai Straits, unless he took the bull by the horns, and anticipated the command by showing that circumstances precluded him from paying his addresses to Blanche Heathcote.

While he spent the next half-hour pacing to and fro on the terraces of the Earl's Court garden, Albert saw that he would do well to have the first word in the library. By allowing his father to open the discussion, he would only allow him to take up a position from which it would be necessary to drive him before the real battle could be begun.

On entering the library at the appointed time, Albert saw that his father was already there, sitting in his easy-chair, and surrounded by many hundreds of gorgeously bound volumes, which their owner had never opened. Having closed the door behind him, the young man opened the game by saying,

"I also, father, want to speak to you about my relations with a young lady whom I hope ere long to make my wife."

"Indeed! eh! your wife?" ejaculated the senior, instantly turning scarlet in the face, as he fidgeted about in his chair. Having thrown off a little steam with those utterances, the banker, making a violent effort to appear calm,

while his long fingers twitched with excitement, remarked, "I'll listen to what you have to say; but mind me first—just a word or two from me first—let us understand our positions. In another day or two your mother's trustees will pay you the £5000 now lying in the Consols, and up to that amount you'll be independent of me; but otherwise it depends on me whether your 'expectations' are satisfied. I am master of my own property, and it is a rule of Providence that every man may do what he likes with his own. My money is *my own*; my share in the bank is *my own*; Earl's Court is *my own*; and, if you venture to marry a girl whom I refuse to acknowledge as a daughter, you sha'n't have a share in *my* bank, nor a shilling of *my* money, nor a single acre of *my* land. There, I am frank with you. And now, what have you to say?"

"That I am very sorry to hear you say so, sir, for I am in love with a young lady whose fortune (I really do not know what it is) may perhaps appear to you insufficient. On no other score can you object to her. I am in love with Lottie Darling."

"Pooh! pooh! then get out of love with her as soon as you have written the proper amount of poetry to her eyebrows. Don't blame me for being hard, because you have run your head against the very post that I warned you from. I ordered you, sir, not to flirt with her, and yet I hear you have been flirting with her every morning for the last two months, under my very nose, without letting me have a suspicion of your disobedience. Well, boys will be boys, and I am not going to say any thing about your contempt for your father's express orders. But if I overlook your disobedience, you mustn't talk any nonsense to me about love and fiddlesticks. Pooh! I am a business man, sir, and I can't spare time to listen to trash of that sort. Now take your orders; be off to Wales this very afternoon—pack your traps, and be off. You know what I mean. If you want money, call at the bank as you go. No, that will be out of your way. Hammerhampton is not on the road to Wales. I have some notes in my pocket, if you want them."

"Thank you, sir, I don't want them."

"Well, then, be off, and don't let me see you when I return from business."

"Sir, I shrink from offending you, but I can not comply with your request."

"You refuse to go to Wales?" asked the father, raising his face.

"I must decline to call on Miss Heathcote."

"That means, you won't marry her?"

"It does, for I am engaged to Miss Darling."

Turning purple with fury at the stupendous announcement, John Guerdon rose from his chair, and screamed at his heir,

"What! what! engaged! Did you dare to say 'engaged?'"

"Yes, sir," Albert answered, quietly, and with

perfect self-possession; "I made my offer to her last night, and she accepted me."

"Then, confound you!" exclaimed the father, using, however, a shorter and more forcible word than "confound" to point the choicest periods of a speech which he roared out screamingly, "for an impudent, unnatural, false-hearted young rascal! Confound you, sir! Do you hear me? Confound you, I say! Confound you for an ungrateful, treacherous, smooth-tongued reprobate! You have dared to disobey my orders under my very nose, and to sit clucking over the knowledge of your abominable conduct, while you kept on, speaking me fair, and playing the part of a dutiful son! You're a confounded hypocrite, sir—a black, poisonous, confounded hypocrite, sir! I'll make no terms with you. Go—go out of my house!—out at once, if you don't wish to carry a father's curse with you!"

John Guerdon sincerely believed that, if he cursed his rebellious offspring, the consequences of the anathema would be awful. Therefore, even in the madness of his rage, he forbore to utter the awful malediction that would pursue its object to the grave. True, he had confounded him several times, and meant to confound him again, with frequent reiterations of a vulgar monosyllable; but he had not yet said, with withering accents, "My curse!—a father's curse be upon you!" The banker had heard many a son cursed in these terms on the stage; and he knew a father in private life who had repudiated his first-born with the same mystic form, and blasted him so effectually that the young man died of *delirium tremens* within a twelvemonth. Differing vastly from the tragic "curse," the vulgar monosyllables might be hurled at any offender any number of times, without serious injury to his health and general welfare.

The storm had burst, and for a time it raged furiously. It was fortunate that its most terrifying fierceness expended itself in angry denunciations of all wicked sons, and that, in his wrath, the stormer made no insulting reference either to Lottie or her parents. In this respect he might have been less temperate had not Ned Barlow shown him that it was not Sir James Darling's business to prevent his daughter from getting a better offer than her future father-in-law desired for her. Anyhow, the furious and screaming gentleman forbore to apply to Lottie's papa and mamma the terms of disapproval in which he might with some justice have spoken of them, had Albert been a sixteen-years-old stripling, instead of a young man who had completed his twenty-fifth year, and had long been his own master in foreign capitals. So far as the Darlings were concerned, Mr. Guerdon evinced a moderation which was consistent with the general decency of the domestic tyrant, who, though an arrant bully and blusterer under provocation, had too much self-respect to slander a worthy neighbor, or asperse gentlewomen with suggestions of dishonor.

And while the storm raged, Albert Guerdon, prudently bending his head toward it, said nothing to exasperate the anger which it was his object to mitigate.

Upon the whole, the elder Mr. Guerdon raged dramatically, and in a style not unworthy of his intelligence. He scolded with the extravagant piquancy of the almost extinct school of elderly gentlemen who used to run up to "Lunnon" at the "monsous" speed of ten miles an hour. His mention of his gray hairs, and the grave to which sorrow would speedily bring them, was, in the highest degree, pathetic. But irascible orators are apt to spoil the effect of their strongest points by following them up with ludicrously weak admissions. It was so on the present occasion with the master of Earl's Court. Having uttered many strong things, and risen to a sublime height, when, for the tenth time, he held the utterable, but unuttered, paternal curse *in terrorem* over the dauntless Albert, he sank into comical bathos by wondering "what the deuce Scrivener would say to it all."

From the moment of this absurd utterance, the game passed into Albert's hands. Had it been John Guerdon's purpose—which it certainly was not—to give his son an opportunity for winning an easy victory, he could have done nothing more conducive to his end than this inopportune and ridiculous mention of his partner.

Not altogether devoid of his father's warmth of temper, Albert could sometimes boil over with indignation. And though he was capable of enduring patiently almost any provocation from his father which had no savor of disrespect for Lottie, the young man fired at the suggestion that he owed obedience to Gimlett Scrivener, a man whom he suspected and disliked.

"Scrivener!" he ejaculated, firing up in the paternal manner.

"Ay, Scrivener—my partner," returned the father, improving Albert's position for an energetic reply. "He has always set his heart on a match between you and Blanche Heathcote; it was his notion, in the first instance. And, ten weeks since, when you bamboozled me into thinking you liked the scheme, I told Scrivener that all would go pleasantly."

Whereupon, standing well on his pins, and looking his father full in the face, with fire flashing from his black eyes, Albert "let fly"—not at his sire, but at the absent Scrivener.

"Scrivener!—his impudence!" cried Albert, uttering the vulgar monosyllable with such a vehement emphasis that it would be unfair to the absent ejaculation to substitute "confound" for it. "How dare he interfere in my most private affairs, and presume to dictate to me whom I shall marry? Sir, that man was your clerk before he was your partner; and has he now the prodigious insolence to command *you* on the most sacred matters? Is the former servant so forgetful of what is due to his bene-

factor that he can presume to order you how to exercise your authority over your only child? Oh! father, I don't say respect me too highly to think me a fit pawn for Mr. Scrivener to play with, but I do beg, sir, that you will respect yourself enough to forbid that upstart to offer you indignities. Anyhow, I will tell the man my mind when I see him in Hammerhampton this afternoon."

"Don't say any thing rash to Scrivener," interposed the father quickly, with a voice that quavered even while it aimed at commanding. "If you make him your enemy, you will have a dangerous enemy."

"Pooh! a fig for the danger!" cried Albert, the wrath of his countenance suddenly passing from the crimson to the pallid stage. "If there's danger, so much the better. I'll make him my enemy this very day, and know the worst as soon as possible. It is right that we should understand one another before we become partners. It is needful he should know that, when I am his partner, he will find me a man with whom he may not presume to take liberties. The man dared to make up a match for me—did he? By heavens, if he does not make me proper apology for his insolence, I'll horsewhip him this very afternoon."

John Guerdon was so veritable a bully that, had Albert stormed at him in this style, instead of only storming *before* him at the absent Scrivener, he would have been cowed by his boy's superior vehemence and loudness, and would have sobered quickly down into a state of submissiveness. But he would also have conceived resentment against the son who had beaten him with his own weapons. As it was, Albert's noisy wrath gave him advantage over his sire, without wounding the old man's sensitive self-love. He admired the flashing eyes and terrifying violence of the young man, whom he had never before seen in a passion. Moreover, he saw that Albert meant to do, and had the courage to do, what he said; that he was no bellowing bullock, but a very lion, whose bite would on an emergency fulfill all the promise of his roar. There was pluck in his attitude, and impetuous intonations, and livid face. And the father, who had long writhed in impotent petulance under a sense of his ignominious subjugation to his partner, was delighted to see that his youngster, on coming into the bank, would be a match for Gimlett Scrivener, and in divers ways strengthen the hands of the senior partner.

The young man's outburst of anger having thus created in his father's mind a favorable diversion of feeling, he was still further assisted to victory by an incident which he might have anticipated, though it surprised him. Like most aging sufferers from chronic gout, John Guerdon had a heart that would not have won the confidence of a Life Assurance Office. It often played him terrifying and painful tricks. Its most frequent misdemeanor was to cease beating for a few moments, until the banker

had turned giddy and, qualmish, and, staggering to a chair, had called faintly for brandy. But sometimes the failing heart declined to resume its functions until the patient had altogether lost consciousness. On the present occasion, misconducting itself, not without provocation, the organ ceased to pulsate; and John Guerdon, gasping for hard life, dropped into his chair, with pallor and pain in his countenance. He did not "go off" altogether, but he almost fainted.

In a trice Albert threw open the windows, and admitted fresh air into the library from the garden. In less than a minute, without alarming a single servant, he had procured brandy and water from the dining-room, and mixed a strong dose of the needful stimulant for the invalid. All of a sudden Albert became very gentle, almost womanly in his tenderness of demeanor. He knelt on one knee by his father, and raised the tumbler of brandy-and-water to his lips. When John Guerdon had nearly emptied the glass, and, reclining again in his chair, had closed his eyes, Albert left him for three minutes, while quiet assisted the drink to work a cure. But, though Albert retired from the library from fear that his presence in the room might retard his father's recovery by occasioning him hurtful unrest, he kept his patient in sight. Passing into the garden by one of the recently opened windows, he stood at a point where he could watch the veteran's white head, and hear his faintest cry.

A few minutes later, on "coming round," John Guerdon was delicately touched by the sympathetic gentleness of his boy, who again—not because it was a picturesque and dramatic posture, but simply because it was the most convenient attitude for his purpose—knelt on his right knee and looked anxiously into his father's eyes.

"Not gone this time, Alb," said the veteran, in his kindest fashion.

"By heavens, sir," returned the son, "if it had been a serious attack, I should not have forgiven myself! I am prodigiously sorry to have excited you so much."

"Tut, tut, Alb! no apologies. There, there, wait a minute. I can't talk quite yet."

"We'll talk no more this morning, sir, about Miss Darling."

"Yes, we will—in a minute."

The father was defeated, and he was glad to know it. The faintness had reminded him opportunely of the weakness of the tenure by which he held his possessions and life. Who was *he* that he should threaten to curse his own son?—*he*, an old man, who might at any moment be in the next world, imploring the Father of all fathers to forgive him for his innumerable sins? No, he could not quarrel with the only flesh and blood in the whole world that had proceeded from his loins. After all, the boy had done no wrong. He had only given his young heart and hopeful life to the lovely girl who had cried so prettily on see-

ing her mother at the railway station. It occurred to John Guerdon how he loved the boy's mother, whom he married in despite of his father's dissuasions; and he remembered that their wedded life had been the brightest and freshest part of his existence. Though he prized money at its full worth, he always congratulated himself on having had enough firmness to resist the father who tried to impose upon him a richer bride. What should he gain, and how much should he lose, from a conflict with his son on a point respecting which a man ought to be allowed to please himself? So, drawn toward the unselfish course by his selfishness, as well as by natural affection, John Guerdon yielded, and determined to avoid a contest in which his years, and weakness, and paternal impulses would fight against him. The brandy may perhaps have helped to bring him to the right decision, for strong drink was apt to stir his benevolence, and Albert had mixed a stiff tumbler.

"Father," said Albert, with simple truth and fervor, "I have never disobeyed you before in the whole course of my life, and, so may God help me in this world and pardon me in the next, I will never disobey you in any other matter than this choice of a wife. Lottie must be my bride. She *is* my bride already. We have plighted our troth."

"And you sha'n't be a disobedient boy in this business," responded John Guerdon, rising from his chair on the return of his usual energy, and, like a sensible man, giving in completely and at once, since he had resolved to give in eventually, "for I give you my leave to marry the girl; and I'll go over to Arleigh as soon as possible, and give her an old man's blessing and kiss."

Taking the old man's hand, Albert wrung it warmly, and tried to put his thanks into words; but, his gratitude to his father proving less eloquent than his indignation against Mr. Scrivener, he hastened from the room without uttering a complete sentence. But no words could have strengthened the declaration of his wet eyes and passionate grasp.

Having recovered his composure in the garden, Albert came round to the chief entrance of the house, in time to see his father start for Owleybury in his pony-phæton.

"Can you manage to get over to Hammerhampton to-day?" the sire asked benignly, before he seated himself in the low carriage.

"Certainly I can, sir, if you would wish me to do so."

"Then call at the bank between two and three, and we'll go out together and buy a gimcrack for Miss Lottie."

Albert expressed his approval with a smile.

"And," added the veteran, who was no less lavish in graciousness than extravagant in rage, "though you won't spend it in a trip to Wales, I may as well give you the check which would have followed you to Bangor. As soon as I get to Hammerhampton, I shall tell Scrivener

of your engagement. No doubt he will be offering his congratulations when you drop in. You must do your best to be civil to him, eh?"

"Bless you, sir! I'll be civil to him, for *now* I have no grudge against him."

Lowering his voice to a very confidential tone, and throwing a droll air of malicious knowingness into his face, John Guerdon said,

"It will be time enough for you to punch his head when I ask you to do it."

"I am not a pugilist, father," Albert responded, adopting his father's jocular tone; "but should you ever order me to hit out at him right and left, I shall carry out your instructions to the best of my ability, for henceforth I am going to be your most obedient son in every thing."

CHAPTER XII.

DANGER AHEAD.

HAVING crossed once more the threshold of his banking-house in George Street, Hammerhampton, John Guerdon, before he looked over the "morning's letters," went straight to his partner's parlor. Mr. Scrivener—a slightly built, pale-faced, and rather dandified gentleman, with a look of crafty resoluteness in his bloodless countenance, and with dark iron-gray hair, appropriate to a man in his fifty-fourth year—was at work in his office, reading and answering letters. An energetic and indefatigable man, Mr. Gimlett Scrivener worked early and late. He seldom allowed himself a day's holiday; and fifteen years had passed since he indulged himself with a trip of pleasure. Besides managing the bank, in matters of detail as well as in greater undertakings, he found time and strength to be the toilsome director of half a score of the joint-stock concerns of the Great Yard.

Cautious financiers, who looked beneath the surface of things, and could see a few years into the future, whispered that he had a hand in too many things, and would sooner or later wish that he had confined himself to his proper business. Other observers of his incessant industry were anticipating a time when the overworked man would "break down" in health. There were other censors, who, without predicting his commercial or physical failure, said that his life was a mistake, because a rich man, who never spent a guinea on idleness and diversion, might just as well be a poor clerk. But, scornful of suggestions that he was "overdoing it," Mr. Scrivener persisted in his devotion to business. No clerk in the employment of Guerdon & Scrivener even entered the bank five minutes after opening hour unless the junior partner was known to be absent from the Great Yard on business. For when in town—*i. e.*, Hammerhampton—Mr. Scrivener seldom failed to enter 16 George Street within three minutes of nine A.M.; and he was not the man to overlook the slightest delinquency in any of his servants. On the present occasion, he had been

at his desk for fully four hours when the ornamental and senior partner arrived from his country house.

"Ah! how d'ye do, Guerdon!" Mr. Scrivener remarked, in an off-hand and sufficiently pleasant fashion, pausing in the middle of a letter which he was writing. "You are late. But there is just nothing for you to do, except to sign a few checks and memoranda. You took 'another bottle' with Mr. Barlow at the club last night? Was the 'yellow seal' in good order?"

"I slept at Earl's Court last night," the senior partner explained.

"Indeed! Then you changed your plans. You told me yesterday that you meant to dine at the club, make a night of it, and sleep in town."

"I ran into the country by the late train to see my boy."

"Indeed! How's he? Nothing the matter with him, I hope?"

"He is in a fever. Don't be alarmed, Scrivener; it ain't a catching fever—at least, to men at your time of life. He is in love."

"What! without going to Wales?" inquired the junior partner, laying down his pen, and displaying a sudden increase of interest in his visitor's words.

"Just so."

"Miss Heathcote has not been staying at Earl's Court, or elsewhere in the neighborhood of Owleybury, has she?"

"Not that I know of. But she is not the lady who has caught my boy."

"I am sorry to hear it."

"He has fallen in love with Sir James Darling's daughter."

Mr. Scrivener's bloodless face became ghastly white at this announcement; but he was so much the master of his feelings, and was so habitual an employer of the means by which wary men suppress and veil their emotions, that the display of agitation was over in ten seconds.

"Of course," rejoined the junior partner, with a clever though rather overacted assumption of carelessness, "you have blown him up, ordered him off to Wales with a flea in his ear, and twenty pounds in his pocket, and told him to see Miss Heathcote at once?"

"I did all that."

Mr. Scrivener's mind was slightly relieved as he answered, "That's all right. He's a boy, and will come to his senses in six weeks."

"But," continued John Guerdon, "he refused to go point-blank, and, what's more, gave me a very good reason for his refusal. He is not only in love with Miss Darling, but he is engaged to her; so there was nothing more for me to do than to forgive him, and wish him happiness without Blanche's money."

Again the white face of the younger partner became whiter; but Mr. Scrivener had it so much under command that he could conceal his alarm at the news, if not his contempt for his partner's want of firmness. Rising from his

chair slowly, and drawing himself to the full height of his slim figure, Mr. Scrivener looked his partner steadily in the eyes, and then deliberately smoothed his own thin dark whiskers to indicate his coolness and perfect freedom from emotion.

"Well?" John Guerdon ejaculated, having observed the movements with which his partner usually preluded a statement that he wished to be very impressive.

"You don't mean to tell me, Guerdon," said Mr. Scrivener, in a hard, wiry, biting voice, "that you have permitted your son, a mere boy in years, to defy your authority without showing your displeasure, and using proper firmness! You don't mean to say that you are going to be so weak as to let him throw away a fine fortune, and marry a girl with only a few thousands to come to her at her parents' death? Surely you can't mean to let him injure himself for life without trying to save him from his folly? It is incredible!"

Mr. Scrivener had hoped that this speech would make the old man bluster, and put him into one of those fits of transient fury which, on their subsidence, always left him in a manageable frame of mind.

But Mr. Guerdon, having already boiled over enough for many a day, declined to resent his partner's impertinent dictation. To his lively chagrin—one might almost say, to his dismay—Mr. Scrivener saw that John Guerdon was not to be irritated just then by impertinent taunts. He saw also that his partner was fully resolved to sanction Albert's marriage with Miss Darling; and, knowing that no ordinary measures subdued John Guerdon when he was in one of his moods of good-humored obstinacy, Mr. Scrivener determined to say nothing more against the match.

"But it is credible! For I mean," rejoined John Guerdon, "to call at Arleigh Manor this very afternoon, and pat the young lady on the head."

"Very good! If that is so, it is so—and I have nothing further to say."

"Quite right, Scrivener, you have nothing further to say. He is *my* son; and if I choose to let him marry for love, I may do so without asking your leave."

Mr. Scrivener laughed a not unpleasant little laugh, as he rejoined, lightly,

"Of course, of course; and, had it not been for my affectionate interest in Albert, I should never have thought of urging you to make him marry Blanche Heathcote, with her £60,000 and her land, with the iron in it. No doubt, as he will be my partner, I should have liked to see him marry a lady whose wealth would be useful in the bank. But, as his friend and future partner, and as his father's partner and intimate friend, I have no right to express dissatisfaction with his choice of Miss Darling, who is, I hear, an extremely beautiful young lady. It is enough for me to wish him happiness in his marriage, as well as in every thing else."

"That's true, Scrivener. And as for Blanche's money, which, of course, I don't like to see slip out of my hands, Albert will have enough without it. You know what the bank yields us as well as I do; and then my farms round Earl's Court bring me in very nearly two thousand a year, and Albert is my only child. Moreover, the boy is clever enough to make a fortune for himself."

In acknowledgment of the justice of these remarks, and to show his reconciliation to a new aspect of affairs, Mr. Scrivener, smiling his politest smile, and extending his right hand, observed,

"Well, my dear Guerdon, let us join hands while I wish you joy of your daughter-in-law. Every body says that she is a most charming creature!"

When John Guerdon had warmly shaken the proffered hand, and quitted his partner's parlor, Mr. Scrivener resumed his seat before the unfinished letter, thinking to himself, "Stupid old fool! even he sees enough of our affairs to know that they require every additional ten thousand pounds of capital on which we can lay our hands. There are signs of coming trouble in the trade of this district, and in the money market of the whole country, and a crisis may arise sooner than John Guerdon imagines, when we may want more credit than we can get. I had thought him more alive than he seems to be to our emergencies; and yet I have been as candid with him as it is possible for me to be to an old fool, whom I am compelled to keep altogether in the dark with respect to half a dozen matters in which he is slightly interested. If he knew all that I know—well, if he did, what then?"

A sardonic smile rose to Mr. Scrivener's keen, clever, bloodless face as he pondered over these questions and answered them mentally, "Well, in that case, he would say some rather uncivil things of me, and then, probably, would burst a blood-vessel! If I were to make a clean breast of it to him, he might die on the spot; but he certainly would not be so anxious as I have tried to make him for a match between Albert and Miss Heathcote. Umph! that scheme, then, is at an end. The danger ahead must be provided for in some other way; or, it may be, I shall retire from the scene, and leave my old friends to take care of themselves. Why not?"

As Mr. Scrivener meditated in this manner, he had the appearance of a thoughtful, keen-witted, well-kept gentleman. But he did not look like a good man.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GIMCRACKS FOR LOTTIE.

WHEN John Guerdon and his son, in the later part of the day, walked down the broad pavement of George Street, and turned into the chief thoroughfare of Hammerhampton, on their way

to the jeweler's shop, where they bought a "gim-crack" for Lottie, the senior made merry on the absurdity of his conduct. It was egregiously ridiculous that an old man with one foot in the grave should spend time and money in choosing adornments for a young lady. He professed total ignorance of the prevailing fashions of jewelry for women, and asked whether a miniature snuff-box, set with brilliants—such as his grandfather had given Albert's great-grandmother Guerdon on her bridal day—would be an appropriate offering to Sir James Darling's child from her future father-in-law.

Famous chiefly for its cumbrous and inelegant products in iron—such as street lamp-posts, kitchen ranges, steam locomotives, marine boilers, rails for iron roads, plates and girders for iron bridges—Hammerhampton also manufactures many knickknackeries, from buckles to buttons, for whose making the cheaper metals are used. And the Hammerhampton retailers of these lighter products of the Great Yard exhibit their goods in shops, whose display of the richest and most fashionable modern jewelry would endure comparison with the show of the same merchandise in the windows of London goldsmiths.

John Guerdon, therefore, had no difficulty in procuring in the High Street of Hammerhampton a suitable present for Lottie; and as he held that things should be done handsomely or not at all, he made his choice of an opal and emerald necklace, without regard to economy. Albert at the same time selected from the jeweler's stock a plain gold bracelet, brightened with a single diamond, somewhat smaller than a marrow-fat pea.

With their purchases in their pockets, the father and son hastened to the railway station, and, catching the afternoon train, ran down to Owleybury, where the Earl's Court carriage had been ordered to meet them.

Their reception at Arleigh accorded with the beneficent temper of the banker, who was bent on impressing Lottie favorably. In the absence of Sir James, who would return in time for dinner, Mary Darling insisted that the visitors should stay and dine at Arleigh; and ere another hour had passed the banker was calling Lottie by her Christian name, and rallying her about her "dark practice" at the butts, as though he had known her from her infancy.

His presentation of the necklace took place in the drawing-room, a few minutes before dinner. His guests being in morning dress, Sir James had not donned the costume which he usually wore in the evening; but Lottie and her mother appeared in full toilet. The banker having never encountered Lottie in society, Lady Darling thought he ought to see her pet to the best advantage. Lottie's toilet, therefore, was grander than the occasion, but not more sumptuous than maternal pride, demanded. Florence Henderson would perhaps have thought her "ridiculously overdressed" for a family dinner; but the banker, appreciating

the motive of the display, was pleased by the attention to himself, and occasioned no embarrassment by the frankness of his allusion to it.

"My dear young lady," said the old man, in his grandest style of pompous benignity, as Lottie entered the room, with a fear that Mr. Guerdon, senior, might not approve her toilet, "you have paid me a very pretty compliment in letting me see your brave plumage and dainty figure. And will you allow an old man, who still has eyesight enough to enjoy the spectacle of feminine beauty, to put a finishing touch to a toilet which is so perfect that I fear my final touch may lessen its effect?"

With this speech, made after the fashion of the "old school," John Guerdon displayed his present to a circle of admiring beholders; and, Lottie having offered her neck to his hands, he encircled her throat with the precious stones, and clasped the chain securely.

The operator was fitly rewarded by Lottie, who placed a hand on each of his broad shoulders, and, standing on tiptoe, put her lips with deliberate tenderness first on the one, and then on the other, of the broad cheeks, which he lowered to receive the salutes.

"You are very, very kind to me, sir," the girl said, with a bright color in her affectionate face, and a corresponding brightness in her dark-blue eyes, when she had kissed the donor of the necklace; "and if Albert's father had not been very, very kind to me, I should have felt it here." The precise spot where she would have felt it Lottie indicated by putting her left hand with dramatic simplicity on her heart.

"My dear Lady Darling," John Guerdon exclaimed, enthusiastically, "she is charming. She is even prettier than when she cried about your neck at the Owleybury railway station."

"Ah," rejoined Mary Darling, exulting in the effect of her child's beauty and graceful ways on Albert's sire, "you know from experience that Lottie has tears as well as smiles."

"Indeed, I only cry once in a long while," Lottie urged, gayly, "and then it is when I am overpowered with happiness. Mr. Guerdon, if you don't wish to see me in tears, you must not be too kind to me."

"My dear," cried the veteran, "when you come and live with us at Earl's Court, you shall cry of joy every day, until Albert and I between us kill you with kindness."

The ladies had not retired from the dining-room full five minutes, when Albert, following in their steps, left the two fathers to talk about money over the wine, which John Guerdon had declared to be better port than any in his own well-reputed cellar.

The talk about money over this choice vintage could not, under the circumstances, fail to be satisfactory. John Guerdon was pleased to discover how nearly he had guessed Lottie's fortune. Her share in her mother's settled property, and the legacy which Sir James intended to leave her, would together amount to £10,000. And Sir James had no amendment

to make to John Guerdon's proposal that Lottie's settlement should consist of this sum, and a life interest of £1000 a year, secured to her on the Earl's Court rental.

Having found that he and his host held precisely the same views respecting port-wine, John Guerdon was in the next place delighted to find that their tastes in music were no less identical. The banker declared that Lottie's songs were worth all the operas in the world. But no one of Lottie's strains delighted the old man so much as her manner of bidding him farewell.

"It was monsous pretty of her, Albert," he remarked, as he drove homeward at a late hour, "to kiss me again in that simple, birdie-birdie way, like a dove cooing in your breast, just before we went off. Of course, she was bound to kiss me when I gave her my 'gim-crack,' and she did it monsous nicely; but that good-night of hers was outside etiquette, and came from her heart."

Albert's cup of triumph was full.

"Lottie," he had whispered to his darling, on leaving her ten minutes before, "you have won my father's heart; there was no need for you to trouble yourself so much to win it. I do thank you for your pains to please him."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONGRATULATIONS.

THE next nine months of Lottie's existence were the happiest that she had ever known, and, upon the whole, the happiest that she has known to this day. Engaged girls are usually satisfied with themselves and the whole world; and Lottie's time of betrothal was a season of beatitude, from the hour in which she accepted Albert to the opening of the month selected for her wedding. Every day had its pleasurable events, every hour its joys.

Congratulations poured in upon her from every quarter of the Owleybury district, and from the womankind of the "set" from which her father had retired on leaving Bedford Place, Russell Square. Much to her surprise, and a little to her annoyance, Tiny Marsh found no opportunity for standing up in her friend's behalf, and silencing her detractors. There was no malice for the man-hunter to keep within legitimate bounds. Christina herself was not more generous and sympathetic to the fortunate damsel than were the two score other girls of the neighborhood who regarded Albert Guerdon as a "grand prize." Even Flo Henderson admitted that her victor at the butts bore her triumphs so gracefully and unassumingly that it was impossible to resent her successes. And while the girls of her own degree behaved thus amiably to Lottie, the grandest ladies of the south-west corner of Boringdonshire condescended to evince their approval of her good fortune. The most potent Countess of Slum-

berbridge lost no time in driving over to Arleigh, and entreating her to come at once for a visit to Castle Coosie, since her opportune engagement qualified her for an immediate introduction to Viscount Snoring.

Of course, some of the half-hundred letters which Lottie sent about the country to announce "a piece of intelligence that will surprise you very greatly" were addressed to our old friends of Hanover Square; and of course she derived infinite delight from the replies which she received from each of the "old Constantines" who figured at the beginning of this narrative as the "privileged girls of the Long Room." In a letter of exuberant gayety, Eugie Bridlemere called her correspondent a sly little puss, and insisted that, even when she declared her intention to "leave it all to mamma," Lottie was an engaged girl. It would be useless for Lottie to deny it. She had sinned against the proprieties, and broken the most sacred law of her old school, by accepting an offer before she had left college. Finny Gough's letter was in a different but equally characteristic vein. Though she congratulated Lottie on an event which occasioned her present gratification, and might not result to her disadvantage, Finny regretted that her friend had decided so quickly to walk in the way of "ordinary women." The more that she thought on the subject, the more convinced was she that marriage, under existing circumstances, was not favorable to the finer instincts and higher capabilities of "woman." It might be otherwise some few years hence, when wives would be allowed to retain their maiden surnames after marriage, and should be invested with wholesome powers over the disposal of their husband's property. But for the present it was best for "woman" to avoid the thralldom of wedlock, and to labor steadily for "woman's political enfranchisement." Still Finny hoped the best for Lottie's too hasty choice of a career; and, if Lottie really desired her to officiate as one of her brides-maids, she (Finny) would control her repugnance to matrimonial frivolities, and appear at the humiliating ceremony. But the letter of the "Brighton series" which pleased Lottie most was Angelica Constantine's congratulatory epistle. Though she was engaged, Lottie was still school-girl enough to think her school-mistress the best woman in the whole world—after her own mamma. The letters from Nice also gave Lottie vivid delight. Consul Darling and his wife wrote epistle after epistle on the interesting topic; and Sister Connie, in terms which proved her to be in excellent spirits, declared her impatience for the wedding, at which it would devolve on her, as the elder sister, to dance barefoot, in accordance with ancient custom.

To heighten Lottie's felicity, "the boys"—*i. e.*, brothers Rupert and Owen—came over to Arleigh on the last day of September, and spent a full month, shooting pheasants with the squires of the district, and riding with the

West Boringdonshire fox-hounds. The two captains of cavalry "got on" so well with their future brother-in-law that they were good enough to call him repeatedly, and in Lottie's hearing, the best fellow, "for a civilian," that they had met for many a day. Lottie's sense of humor was all the more agreeably tickled by this strictly limited commendation, as she knew that, coming from her brothers' lips, it implied a very high degree of admiration for her lover. It meant that Albert only missed perfection from not being in "the service." Instead, therefore, of resenting the faintness of the praise, Lottie made herself merry with it, and now and then saucily affixed the qualifying words to her own praise of the non-belligerent.

When Albert rode up, one afternoon, to the manor-house, on his homeward way from hunting, and gave Lottie "the brush," which he had borne off from her brothers and half a score other hard riders, she turned a roguish face to Rupert and Owen, as she said,

"By your own admission, my brothers, it appears that Albert does not ride badly—for a civilian."

In the course of two more months, when winter, driving horsemen from the open fields, had covered the country with snow and the ponds with ice, Albert provided Lottie with a pair of skates, and taking her daily to Lake Head, became her efficient instructor in another womanly pastime. It was fortunate for Lottie that, on undertaking to be her professor in skating, he knew much more than "just nothing

about it." He was an excellent skater; his "spread eagles," and the other devices which he graced on the crystal plane with the inner and outer edges of his tools, were things of high art; and ere the sharp winter broke up, Lottie could run on her skates with equal gracefulness and security, and even produced on the ice some miserably inadequate "figures of eight." Ah! how musically the cries and shouts of the Lake Head skaters sounded in the frosty air, whether the sun shone forth with cold brilliance, or vainly strove to dispel the white mists which sometimes multiplied the surprises, without lessening the pleasure, of "a morning on the ice!" And even better than the merry noise of the skaters was the clear ringing of their skates as they struck and cut the hardened water. Until she had those days on the ice, Lottie had never known the delicious warmth which comes from violent exercise in frosty air; nor had she ever had an opportunity of deciding how far a sanguine ruddiness—an almost crimson brilliance of color—suited her style of beauty.

Yes, they were happy days! And so were the days of spring, when, on Clifton's back, she accompanied Albert to "meets," or rode by his side over down and moor, and through the winding lanes of the Valley of the Luce, in their systematic explorations of the scenery of West Boringdonshire. They were the days of the love which brightened her beauty and gladdened her heart for a while. They were the days of the love to which this first part of Lottie's story is indebted for its title.

BOOK II.—MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

A GRAND CATASTROPHE.

IT was arranged that Lottie and Albert should be married in the last week of June, in the next year after that of her engagement—rather more than twelve full months after her retirement from Hanover Square. And as June drew near and nearer, Mary Darling, exhibiting nothing of the sadness often apparent in the face of an affectionate mother on the approach of a favorite daughter's wedding, bestirred herself with preparations for the nuptial day. A chief element of Lottie's many-joyed felicity, at this crisis of her life, was the gratification which she derived from witnessing the growing gladness of her mother's voice and smiles. For a while the aging lady was insensible to the touches of time. It seemed that her perfect vigor had revisited her, even as the falling sun sometimes glorifies a landscape with beams brighter than its noontide rays, just before it sinks and dies out quickly. Exertion no longer fatigued her. Youth threw its old lights into her countenance, and her buoyant spirits expressed themselves in drolleries of speech. Again and again in those joyous days she surprised her husband with bursts of rippling laughter that caused him to exclaim, "It makes me a youngster again to hear you, Mary." To give her mother such happiness, Lottie, under no strong pressure, would have sacrificed herself to the extent of marrying a man whom she loved only a little. She thought herself a strangely fortunate girl in being able to occasion the delight by giving herself to the man whom she loved entirely.

It having been decided that the young people must marry into Earl's Court, the chief rooms of the house were redecorated and altogether refurnished for the bride, who would be the mansion's mistress. The trousseau had been bought, the bridal wreath ordered, and the wedding-guests invited. Consul Darling, and Aunt Darling, and sister Connie (not a whit jealous of her sister's preferment) had fixed the day on which they would start from Nice, so as to spend a few days in Boringdonshire before the marriage. Of course Connie had received the "first brides-maid's" commission, and it was settled that she should be assisted in her ministering office by eleven other damsels, in a uniform of daintiest millinery. With the exception of Josephine Gough, whose rapidly increasing contempt for matrimony caused her at the last moment to cry off from her compact, all the "Old Constantines" of the long room had, in letters of gushing effusive-

ness, declared the delight it would give them to keep their plighted word.

With her usual levity, Eugie Bridlemere had assumed the part of a feminine moralist, and, burlesquing the tone of an extremely discreet person, had written a series of epistles, in which she pretended to prepare Lottie for the duties and trials of wedlock, and to give her sound instruction on matters of housekeeping. "Above all things, my dear young friend," Eugie concluded one of her notes, in a style worthy of Mrs. Chapone, "avoid the inexperienced wife's most common and disastrous mistake, and do not be so elated by your Albert's commendations and endearments as to imagine yourself an all-sufficient companion for him. The complaisance of a grateful husband will be likely to mislead you into supposing that he can detect no sameness in your conversation or monotony in your addresses. Do not flatter yourself with the fond belief that familiarity will not diminish his satisfaction with your wit and personal fascinations. The rose loses much of its perfume to him who, smelling it incessantly, inhales the odor of no other flower. To defer as long as possible the mournful day on which he will awake from his illusion, and find you very much like other personable girls, welcome to your home those of your old schoolmates whose humor and vivacity may aid you in your endeavors to amuse him. To reward them for their zealous co-operation, you will, of course, not omit to entertain young and unmarried guests of the sterner sex. In my next epistle, my dear young friend, I shall speak about *the table* and *the cook*, two most important topics, that can not be considered too seriously by a young woman on the threshold of wedlock. For the present, I remain your anxious and sincere well-wisher,—EUGENIA BRIDLEMERE."

But the bridal, for which the preparations had been made, and the invitations dispersed, was deferred in consequence of an event that occurred within a fortnight of the day appointed for its celebration.

On a certain day in the second week of June, Albert had ridden over from Earl's Court to Arleigh in the afternoon, with the intention of accompanying Lady Darling and Lottie in a drive; and he was standing with the two ladies on the lawn, when he saw his father's groom come at full gallop up the carriage-way to the entrance of the manor-house. The horseman's speed, and the flecks of foam on his animal's glossy coat, showed that he had come on urgent business.

Before the servant had fairly dismounted,

and ere he could find time to pull the door-bell, Albert was by his side, asking the cause of his excitement and haste.

"My master wants you directly, sir, at Earl's Court," was the man's answer.

"Indeed! He has returned from Hammerhampton sooner than he intended."

"Came back, sir, by the early afternoon train, instead of the later train, which I was ordered to meet with the cob at Owleybury. Drove over from Owleybury, sir, in a fly, and meeting me at the Court gates, just as I was starting for the station, told me to go off at once for you."

"Did he send no message, except that he wished to see me without delay?"

"No, sir. He put his head out of the fly window, and called out at his loudest, 'Where's Mr. Albert?' Says I, 'Sir, he's rid out on Emperor, and gone, I think, to Arleigh Manor.' He calls out, 'Then off after him at once, and tell him to come to me instantly.' I touched my hat, sir, in taking instructions, and then, as I was leading the cob, I turned round toward the stables to get rid of the pony."

"Well, be quick!"

"Where are you going?" master cries out hotly. And then, seeing what it was, before I could answer, he burst open the fly door, and hurrying up to me, catches hold of the cob. 'Here!' he cries out, 'I have the cob—let go his rein. Now you go off to Arleigh!—use your spurs!—ride like hell!' They were master's orders, sir, and I've obeyed them."

"My father must have been very excited."

"He were a trifle hotter than usual, sir; and he wouldn't have ordered me to ride like hell—it was master's word, sir—along the hard roads, unless he had meant it."

"Of course not, John—you are all right."

For an instant Albert was on the point of asking the groom if he knew what had occurred to bring his master back from Hammerhampton so soon, and in such excitement. But he refrained from putting the inquiry, for he felt that the cause was some important matter respecting which he should not exchange words with a servant. In half an hour he would learn every thing from his father's lips.

"Emperor is in the stables," he observed. "Fetch him to the door instantly."

While this order was being executed, Albert returned to the ladies, and hastily explained the circumstances which required him to go back at once to Earl's Court.

"Something must have gone wrong at Hammerhampton," he observed to Lottie and her mother.

"Not at the bank?" Lady Darling rejoined.

"That is my fear. But say nothing till you hear from me. Before night you shall know what has taken place."

"Send a messenger to me," Lottie entreated, "as soon as you have learned that we have no reason for alarm."

"Of course, dear; or as soon as I have learned the mishap. Good-bye, pet; and good-bye, Lady Darling."

Emperor had already been led round to the front of the house; and in a trice Albert was mounted and "off." Remembering his father's injunction to the groom, he took no thought for any thing but speed. If Emperor only carried him like lightning to Earl's Court, he might turn up lame, and recover at his leisure. Lottie, with a pale face and fluttering heart, heard Emperor's hoofs clatter down the steep, hard carriage-way, and in two minutes she caught a momentary sight of her lover riding along the homeward road at racing speed.

What can have happened? What has gone wrong? were the questions which she asked herself, and which Emperor's rider at the same time put to himself, again and again.

Albert's suspense did not last many minutes.

Dropping from his saddle at the very moment when he checked his panting animal at the front door of Earl's Court, and throwing his bridle rein to a stable-man, who was at hand in anticipation of his young master's return, Albert ran into the entrance hall, where he was encountered by his father, whose countenance exhibited the signs of an overpowering agitation.

"By heavens, I thought you'd never be here! The man could not find you, eh? Thank God you're here at last! Quick, come this way! I want a word with you," the old man observed, hurriedly and impatiently, but with no querulousness, as he led the way to the library, where we have before seen father and son in conference.

Until he had closed the door behind him, and seen that the windows were shut against listeners, Albert did not say a word; and then he merely asked, "What is it, father?"

Turning suddenly from white to purple in his anguish and humiliation, while a palsy seized his hands, John Guerdon answered, "The bank has stopped! I am a bankrupt! That—scoundrel Scrivener!"

"Where is he? Has he returned from London?"

"The villain will never show again in the Great Yard. He has fled the country and justice. God knows—no, no, *the devil* knows where the rascal is! I don't. No one does. But I'll hunt him down, and put him in a felon's dock. You know it all now, Alb. The bank has stopped, and I am ruined! Thank God, you were not in it! Thank God, you've got your £5000, and youth, and strength, and cleverness. You may yet work up again. But I—I am a bankrupt!"

The Power that reads the mysteries and controls the course of every human life, alone can tell the torture of shame which the pompous old man experienced as he thus avowed his ruin and disgrace; admitting, with furious maledictions on his treacherous partner, that he had *failed* utterly in the only way of life in which

he ever tried to succeed—the way, moreover, in which success had been made so easy for him. As he heard the bitter acknowledgment of ignominious defeat, Albert was less afflicted by the sudden disappearance of his own prosperity than touched by the fatherly affection expressed by the old man's satisfaction at the safety of his son's small maternal inheritance.

"Come, come, father," he said, gently, as he took his sire's hand, and led him to his easy-chair, "be calm and brave, even if we can't be hopeful. Compose yourself; for you have much more to say to me. You must tell me all about it. Stay, sir," he added, when the veteran had dropped into his customary seat, "you need refreshment, and may not speak another word until you have had a biscuit and some brandy-and-water. I will fetch them for you myself, sir, so that we may have no fuss of servants about us."

When the old man, who from that moment fell obediently into his son's considerate government, had got the better of his sharper agitations, and taken some of the urgently needed refreshments, Albert gained from him a complete picture of the morning's incidents at the bank, and learned also several circumstances which had led up to the day's disaster.

Though he had not anticipated any such catastrophe as the total collapse of the bank, John Guerdon had for months been anxious about his affairs, and known that his business was in an unsatisfactory, if not urgently perilous, state. He had more than once been on the point of revealing his troubles to Albert; but the necessity for strict silence had been imposed upon him by his partner. Moreover, while he could hope that "things would right themselves," he had shrunk from disturbing Albert's felicity with apprehensions of disaster. On the other hand, engrossed by the pleasures of his daily intercourse with Lottie, by the social diversions of the neighborhood, and by the preparations for his marriage, Albert had of late seen comparatively little of his father, and thought just nothing about Hammerhampton and Mr. Scrivener. Apart from his knowledge that Hammerhampton had a bank which duly honored his checks, and of which he would in the course of a few months be a partner, he had given scarcely a thought to the house in George Street. He had a faculty for deferring subjects to convenient seasons, and dismissing them altogether from his mind until the proper time came for deliberating about them. Until he should have become a partner in the bank, there was no need for him to trouble about its doings. When he had returned from his wedding trip to Switzerland and the Italian lakes, he would give due attention to business. So the bank had been going rapidly to ruin, and the father had been concealing his anxieties, while the young man enjoyed himself in the neighborhood of Owleybury. But now that the crash had come, Albert quickly recalled words, and

looks which his father had spoken or given inadvertently, that ought to have roused his suspicions.

For many months difficulties had been accumulating in George Street. During the last fortnight the Great Yard had been alive, and daily growing more lively, with ugly suspicions and strange rumors about Guerdon and Scrivener. Mr. Scrivener had run up to town just as certain heavy bills, which he had accepted in the interest of his private affairs, were coming due. This was not of itself remarkable; for the busy man was in the habit of leaving Hammerhampton abruptly, and making long journeys by express trains. But several gentlemen of affairs became uneasy when Mr. Scrivener failed to return within forty-eight hours of the full time for the presentation of the bills, for which the absent speculator had made no provision. The holders of the paper spoke to Mr. Guerdon, who could only assure them that his partner would return in a day or two from distant scenes of business. Not less surprised than the applicants for information at his partner's behavior, John Guerdon had sent letters and telegrams to a score of places, hotels and offices, in different parts of the country, where it seemed probable that Mr. Scrivener would come upon one of them. The sudden and unexplained absence of such a man as Mr. Scrivener from the ordinary scenes of his industry was an event that could not fail to occasion gossip and wonderment in the Great Yard. If it continued for many days, it could not fail to draw suspicious attention to every one of the concerns of which he was a conspicuous manager. It would necessarily provoke inquiries, and strike at confidence in the bank of which the junior partner had for many days been the real master.

Knowing this, and cognizant, moreover, of several pieces of business that urgently required Mr. Scrivener's presence in his bank parlor, John Guerdon had for days been in a state of bewilderment and fever. At first, it never occurred to the ornamental partner that his bank was on the point of falling, and that Mr. Scrivener had fled to avoid the spectacle and embarrassments of its collapse. It was not the first time that Scrivener, with characteristic energy and secrecy, had run from Hammerhampton at a critical moment, and, after covering thousands of miles in a few days, had returned to the Great Yard with valuable information, gathered by personal observation from several remote spots. But as day followed day, and yet the absentee neither re-appeared nor wrote an account of himself, John Guerdon passed from bewilderment and fever to rage and panic. During the last two or three entire days of his suspense accounts had been withdrawn from the bank, with ominous reticence, by men who had trusted him for years; and on the day when the bank fell, John Guerdon had gone into Hammerhampton with the intention of calling on one or two old and powerful friends,

such as Ned Barlow, and revealing his distress to them.

On arriving at George Street, barely ten minutes after the usual hour for opening the bank, he found before his place of business a dense crowd, that eyed him angrily, and hummed resentfully as it made way for him. Seeing that it would be useless for him to try to force an entrance into his own parlor, through the throng that occupied the vestibule, the passage, and open spaces of the chief office, he entered the house by a private door, and in another minute was closeted with Mr. Jacob Coleman, an elderly, hard-featured man, who had for many years been chief clerk and chief cashier of the falling house.

"A run on the bank?" said John Guerdon, with an effort to maintain an appearance at calmness.

"I need not say 'yes' to you," grimly returned the hard-featured clerk, who, seeing his only means of livelihood slipping from his fingers, was naturally resentful against the fugitive partner, and, in the absence of the real author of the calamity, was ungenerously disposed to wreak his wrath on the scoundrel's chief victim.

"Any thing been heard of Scrivener?" was the master's next inquiry.

"Nothing, except that every one is inquiring for him. The *Shipping News* shows that it was open to him to choose between half a dozen ports of America, if he meant to cross the Atlantic. He may be on the Continent or in his own coal-cellar, for all I know."

It did not escape the pompous banker, in his hour of humiliation, that Mr. Coleman, who had hitherto been consistently obsequious to his employers, forebore to address him as "sir," or with any sign of respect. Mr. Coleman knew that the bank was broken irretrievably, and having made no provision against a rainy day, he was enraged against the man who had hitherto given him good wages for steady work.

"Seen any thing of Mrs. Scrivener?"

"Saw her again as I came here. She knows nothing about her husband—at least, she says so."

"How long can we stand out with what we have in the house?"

"Not two hours. This is how it stands with Guerdon & Scrivener," replied Mr. Coleman, exhibiting an open ledger, and pointing with his forefinger to two columns of arithmetical statement.

"Much can be done in two hours," John Guerdon rejoined, running his eyes over the figures submitted to his notice.

"Much need be done," returned the clerk, bitterly. "The cashiers have been told to pay out as slowly as possible, and they'll obey the order. Poor fellows! it is to their interest to give you as much time as possible. Ah! poor fellows, there are hard times in store for them!"

In pitying the poor clerks, the hard-featured

Mr. Coleman was pitying himself. The selfish can compassionate in edifying terms the misfortunes in which they are themselves sharers. Indeed, if we all felt for the troubles of others as we do for our own, the pulpits might cease to enforce the first of Christian duties.

"Humph!" ejaculated John Guerdon—"another £6740 withdrawn yesterday after I left!"

"Precisely so, if we say nothing of odd shillings and pence."

"Send a messenger immediately to Mr. Edward Barlow, and ask him to come round to me."

A sardonic grin of vindictive derision brightened Mr. Coleman's features as he said,

"If he does, he won't bring any money with him. He drew his balance and closed his account yesterday afternoon, just after you left. You see, he is a delicate and feeling gentleman, and did not come in till he knew that you had started for the train."

John Guerdon's face grew pale, and his cheeks longer, at this announcement of his old chum's desertion of the falling house.

"Umph! something must be done, Mr. Coleman," the ornamental partner remarked, with an air of ludicrous helplessness.

"You said much about the same thing before, Mr. Guerdon."

"I will telegraph for supplies—anyhow, I'll do something."

"The telegraph! pooh! I shall have to put the shutters up before the telegrams are delivered."

For an hour and more, however, John Guerdon exerted himself to do something with an energy, if not with a discretion, worthy of his position. He sent off half a dozen notes to intimate friends, who were among the chief capitalists of the Great Yard; and he dispatched three telegraphic messages to London bankers whom he had assisted in their seasons of trial. Having done this, John Guerdon, coming forth from his bank parlor into the office, which was densely crowded with quaking clients, assured the assembly that there was no cause for alarm. The run would not exhaust the resources of the bank, though there might be a brief cessation of payments toward the middle of the day, till supplies of cash and notes should arrive by the afternoon train. The self-sufficient manner in which he had trained himself for half a century, and his stately presence, enabled him to make this hopeful and fallacious statement in a style that caused a few of his auditors to think that he was telling them the truth. Having done thus much to restore public confidence, John Guerdon retired to his parlor, and paced to and fro, while he counted the minutes until the looked for supplies should arrive.

The run soon extinguished the bank. A fight between a prize-fighter and a fat baker would be a fairer contest than the battle between the Great Yard and the tottering concern. The house lived barely long enough to

witness the arrival of supplies from London in the shape of two telegrams from two of the banks to which John Guerdon had applied for assistance. "Can not comply with your request," and, "Regret to say it is impossible," were the two answers to the entreaties for instant help. Four out of the six gentlemen to whom the letters were sent had by this time come round to the scene of excitement; but knowing the desperate condition of the establishment, and suspecting that Scrivener's speculations would involve his bank partner in prodigious losses, they neither brought money, nor held out hope that they would furnish any, until an examination of accounts had satisfied them that the house was solvent.

But they did what was better. They made their luckless friend see that it was bootless for him to continue the fight with his many-headed antagonist. If he should find himself in a position to do so, he could resume business next week, or on the very next day. But as there were no available funds wherewith to meet instant demands, he must put up his shutters, together with an appropriate expression of sorrow at being compelled to stop payment temporarily. One of the visitors who thus urged the banker to take at once the only course open to him drew up the requisite announcement in conciliatory and buoyant terms, that declared the banker's confidence in his ability to liquidate all claims, and resume his business at an early date. The paper, with John Guerdon's signature attached to it, had no sooner been pasted on a wall of the large office, and been read aloud by one of the excited assembly, than cries arose from several voices that no one should leave without his money. But the clamor of the throng inside and outside the bank was as impotent to affect the course of events as had been poor Mr. Guerdon's brave resolve to "do something." In a trice the iron shutters were rolled upward with mechanical exactness by a servant working a crank that was neither in the reach nor the sight of the malcontents, who, recognizing their weakness as soon as daylight had been excluded from the chamber, saw that they might as well carry off their unpaid notes and checks, and their bitter disappointment, to a place more suitable to the resentful discussion of grievances.

Slipping away from his friends, who began to encumber him with invitations to dinner, and with professions of their unalterable regard for his virtues, poor John Guerdon escaped from the premises by a back yard, and, catching the early afternoon train, ran down to Owleybury.

Such was the story the broken man told to Albert by degrees, with many outbreaks of passionate feeling, and not a few pathetically prolix descriptions of the trivial circumstances of "the run on Guerdon & Scrivener's bank." The tale of disaster might have been told with greater dignity and less diffuseness; but Albert gathered from it a sufficiently clear view of the

morning's incidents in George Street, and of the position of his father's affairs. Indeed, all that it was needful for him to know he had learned in a very brief time. For the moment it was enough for him to realize that, instead of being a rich man's heir, he was the son of a bankrupt, of whom the world would doubtless speak with the disdain and resentment which it is wont to express for a bankrupt whose failure is attended with wide-spread misery to the needy and industrious.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN GUERDON "DRIVES DULL CARE AWAY."

HAVING made a clean breast of it to his son, John Guerdon became calmer. His eyes, indeed, flashed vindictively, and the wrath of his breast vented itself in fierce maledictions whenever the treacherous Scrivener's name or conduct rose in the conversation; but the broken man was soon able to talk with outward composure, as well as with frankness, of the disaster that, even in his imperfect knowledge of the magnitude of Scrivener's defalcations, and of the extent to which those defalcations affected the bank, he recognized as tantamount to his utter ruin. When the old man had talked himself into a kind of familiarity with his misfortunes, Albert left him for a few minutes, to write and dispatch by messenger the following letter to Lottie:

"You have probably heard by this time, my dear Lottie, the cause of my sudden summons to Earl's Court. Doubtless, your father has already told you that my father's partner has fled from Hammerhampton, and that a run on the bank has caused its collapse. The extent of the misfortune I, of course, can not say at present, and shall not know for many days. My father, yielding to the infirmities of age, has of late years left the bank so much to Mr. Scrivener that it would be strange if, within a few hours of its failure, he could state precisely the amount of its liabilities, and the measure of its inadequate means to meet them. But, from his necessarily incomplete revelations, it is obvious that his bankruptcy precludes all grounds for hoping that the business may be restored. It would be cruelty and dishonor for me to bid you to think hopefully about affairs that are beyond hope. You are brave enough to endure the shock of learning that the blow, which makes my dear father a bankrupt, has deprived me altogether of the prosperity which it was our purpose to enjoy with thankfulness, and use to good ends. Instead of being rich, I have, in a few hours, become so poor that, were I only an apparent suitor for your love, your father might reasonably refuse to give you to so poor a man. To my own exertions, and power of making a position for myself, with very little aid from external resources, I

must henceforth trust for giving you a fit home when we marry. Under these circumstances, my beauty, you must prepare yourself for a postponement—not a long one—of our wedding. Of course, on this point, I am altogether in your hands, and you are altogether in the hands of your father, who, out of the love which he has always shown you, will make your happiness his first thought, before, out of the affection and generous considerateness which have governed his treatment of me throughout our engagement, he will think how he can make his decision agreeable to my wishes. Perhaps he may think there is no need for a long postponement of our marriage; perhaps he will even be of opinion that our wedding may be celebrated in *strict privacy* on the day appointed for our union.

"But there are so many weighty and obvious reasons for a decision which would defer for a considerable period the realization of our sweetest hopes, that I entreat you, my beautiful one, to prepare yourself for a heavy disappointment. Whatever may be your father's conclusion on this matter of first interest to us, you may be sure that he will arrive at it out of pure love for you, and a proper regard for his responsibilities. And should it occasion me dissatisfaction, or even a sharper pain, you may comfort yourself by reflecting that the judgment will not cause me to overlook his kindness to me, or question his affection for me. Were not you the first of my personal interests, I should blush for my selfishness in giving them so much prominence in a letter occasioned by my dear father's worldly ruin, under circumstances that will, alas! make him appear the enemy and betrayer of those who have trusted him. It agonizes me to see the fine old man brought so low, and striving so bravely to endure his misfortunes with dignity. It cuts me through the heart, and through it again, to know that his calamity involves ruin to hundreds of innocent persons, and serious misadventure to thousands. But don't think of my wretchedness, pet. Sorrow is good for all of us; and the knowledge that it is so is the best of all consolations for the sorrowful. It was a wise and merciful man who said that, the world being what it was, misery was about the best thing in it. As it will devolve on me for several days to be my father's constant companion, and the comforter of his affliction, ten minutes in every four-and-twenty hours is as much time as I shall be able to spend in your society during the next week. But, come what may, I will endeavor to see you for a few moments every day. To-morrow I shall probably be required to spend in Hammerhampton; in that case, if I can with propriety leave my father, I will ride over to Arleigh in the evening. Give my love to your mamma, and tell her that she can do me no unkindler thing than to fret overmuch about our troubles. My love also to Sir James; assure him that I wish him, in deciding for us, to think only of you. What is for your good

must, in the long run, be for *my* happiness. Good-bye, again, beauty. Mind, no tears in the darkness! Be cheerful by night as well as by day. The black clouds are over us just now, but there's a sun that will break through them in an hour or two. There is a kiss for you on our usual corner of the paper. ALBERT."

When Albert had dispatched this letter, the Earl's Court dinner hour had arrived, at which meal, though he had no appetite for food, it was incumbent on him to bear his father company. Unlike his son, John Guerdon went to the table with a manifest desire to find diversion and solace in its pleasures. At all times a hearty feeder, the old man now ate greedily, and drank with proportionate freedom. Having taken two large glasses of Madeira with his fish, he called for more of the wine with his cutlet, and rallied his son on his temperance. It was the same throughout the later courses of the meal; and when the white cloth had been removed, and the glasses were reflected from the burnished surface of the dark mahogany board, the banker, whose bank had expired in the morning, clutched the decanter of '20 port as though it were a life-buoy flung out to save him from drowning. At first his father's obvious purpose affected Albert with a sense of lively repugnance. He would have preferred a stouter and more stoical demeanor in the defeated veteran. But, compassion in a few minutes overcoming every other feeling, Albert was reconciled to the unedifying spectacle; and filling his claret glass with an affectation of hilarity, he even encouraged his sire to drink away his care and sense of humiliation.

As he gulped down the second bottle of '20, which he ordered on the plea that he needed to be cheered up, John Guerdon talked huskily about the morrow, and proposed that, while he remained at Earl's Court, Albert should go into Hammerhampton and request certain persons—such as Mr. Jacob Coleman, Mr. Greaves (the solicitor), and other persons connected with Guerdon & Scrivener's affairs—to come at once to Earl's Court.

CHAPTER III.

SIR JAMES DARLING'S DECISION.

ALBERT was right in presuming that his letter would not reach Lottie before she had heard of the fall of the bank. As Sir James Darling held a court on that day in the metropolis of the Great Yard, he was aware of the run on the bank before it had broken the banker. The tradesmen, on whose petty claims he adjudicated in the County Court, were well aware of what was going on in George Street. Some of them had sent their strongest clerks to join in the "rush for immediate payment." Others of them were themselves in the crowd before the bank, while attorneys represented

them before Sir James's tribunal. The knowledge that his account made him a creditor of the falling bank for more than £800 did not help the judge to maintain his usual equanimity on the seat of justice. But the loss of such a sum was a flea-bite in comparison with the apprehension that he would be found to have chosen a bankrupt's son for his pretty daughter.

On his way from his court to the railway station in the afternoon, Sir James Darling encountered several acquaintances who gave him alarming accounts of Mr. Scrivener's defalcations. At the station the iron-masters and manufacturers, awaiting the arrival of the down train, were in a state of lively and loquacious excitement. There were half a score enterprises in which the fugitive had speculated to his loss. He had dropped money on slate-quarries and lead-mines, on bad iron-workings and unprofitable borings for coal. He had suffered largely in the railway panic, and made frantic endeavors to recover his losses on the Stock Exchange. He had held shares in the West London Universal Building Society, which collapsed six months since, and had lent heavy sums to bubble Life Insurance Associations. Had every thing which Sir James Darling heard at the railway station been true, Mr. Gimlett Scrivener would have made away with a million sterling more than the creditably large sum of £170,000, which ultimately proved to be the total of his debts and defalcations. But in an atmosphere surcharged with fear, suspicion, and resentment, the quidnuncs of the Great Yard were in no humor to be nicely accurate in what they said, or nicely critical of what they heard. It was an hour of wild statements and unlimited credulity. The scoundrel's flight and crimes were the one topic of the several towns of the vast region of workshops. As Sir James Darling stood on the platform in a babbling throng, the newsboys of the evening's *Iron Times* were crying at the top of their metallic voices, "Gigantic Bank Failure! Crash of the Hammerhampton Bank! Enormous frauds of the absconding partner!" "Fraud! It was an ugly word! The small judge of a small court shrugged his little shoulders, and shivered (hot day though it was) from the white patch of his bald crown down to his absurdly minute feet, as his ears caught the reiterations of "enormous frauds." What if John Guerdon should be implicated in his partner's felonious acts? What if the man whom he (Sir James Darling, Q.C.), and all the other letters) had chosen for a son-in-law, should bear a name tainted with felony? As these thoughts occurred to the judge, selfish fear blanched his cheeks and made his knees tremble.

"If so?" he murmured. "Good heavens, if so? What an escape for my child! And, even though she *is not* married, what a scandal!"

Before the judge again arrived at Arleigh, he had decided that Lottie's marriage must be deferred. If it should appear that John Guerdon had not participated in his partner's nefarious

proceedings, the wedding could take place when Albert had breasted the waves of adverse circumstance, and should, in some honorable calling, be making an income sufficient for the suitable maintenance of a wife. If, on the other hand, it should be found that Mr. Guerdon, senior, had perpetrated any grievous commercial misdemeanor, or had in any way seriously compromised his honor, Lottie must be required to sacrifice herself for her family, and dismiss Mr. Guerdon, junior. Should this extreme and painful measure be necessary, Albert would, of course, like an honorable man, relieve an innocent girl and her family of their embarrassment by retiring from a position which he had gained through a misunderstanding. Anyhow, the wedding must be postponed. Under the distressing circumstances, it would be a flagrant scandal for a wedding to take place in Mr. Guerdon's family, while his outraged creditors were seizing and selling his estate. As one of Her Majesty's judges, and a representative of public morality, Sir James Darling felt himself bound to stifle his gentler feelings, and prevent a scandal in which he would figure as a principal actor. The obligations of his office required him to be firm. When public duty and private interest recommend a mean and selfish course, men are often extraordinarily zealous in doing their duty to society.

Sir James Darling's first act, after recrossing his threshold, was to inform his wife of the disaster in George Street. At the same time he bade her lose not a minute in telling Lottie that her marriage was postponed. He gave the news and the order in quick, sharp sentences, uttered in an authoritative tone, which he had not used for several months to any member of his family. The genial father and husband had disappeared, and been replaced by the stiff, straight-backed, imperious little despot. The bank had failed. He had doubtless lost the greater part of his deposit. Mr. Guerdon, senior, was a bankrupt. There was no doubt that Mr. Guerdon was completely ruined, that Earl's Court would pass at once into the possession of his creditors, and that Albert would have to work hard, like any other almost penniless young man, for his living. There was, of course, no blame attaching to the young man, whose misfortune demanded compassion. But it was a fact that he was not in a position to marry; and his union with Lottie would therefore be put off *sine die*. It was best that Lottie should be told so at once. Lady Darling would be good enough to tell her the truth immediately. There would be no good in withholding the painful fact from the dear girl, or in palliating it to her. She had better be told before dinner, and be at the same time instructed to appear at dinner as though nothing particular had happened. Sir James Darling "hated scenes," and he hoped his dear Lottie would behave bravely, and spare her father the discomfort of "a scene." After dinner he would go to work in the library, writing letters of explanation to the many persons who

must be informed at once that the wedding, to which they had been invited, was deferred. It would be well if Lady Darling assisted him in this troublesome work.

Mary Darling began to plead for a few hours' reprieve. The mother felt that she could break the dismal tidings to Lottie more gently, and no less effectually, if she told them to her when the poor girl had retired to her bed. She could then find time to put her arms round the child's neck, and console her with motherly kisses. Lady Darling was on the point of saying this; she had even hazarded the opinion that Lottie should not be spoken to till the close of the evening, when she was silenced by a quick, sharp glance, and the icy fixedness of a pair of thin lips. Lady Darling knew that expostulation was in vain when her lord assumed that look, and setting of the lips. The judge and lawgiver, under his own roof, was ready to assert himself, and bear down all resistance to his will. Knowing her place, and the extent of her powers, Mary Darling retired at once to execute James's bidding.

Twenty minutes later, when Sir James entered the drawing-room, dressed in his black clothes, white tie, and pumps fitted with bows of black ribbon, Lottie and her mamma were ready to receive him. The girl was pale, and there was a barely perceptible redness in her eyelids. Her lips, also, quivered slightly as her eyes fell under her father's observation. At a glance he saw that Mary had obeyed her instructions, and that Lottie, having taken the cue, with her usual docility, was bent on playing the part of a brave girl. For a few short moments there was danger of "a scene," when Lottie, advancing to her father, kissed him, and essayed to whisper a few words into his ear. But there was a something—an austere, pedantic coldness—in the little man's dry, hard face, which cut the whisper short, and put down her rising heart with an icy influence. She could not have said in what the change consisted, but he was strangely altered from what he had been in the morning. No longer the gracious, frank, sympathetic companion that he had been to her ever since her return from school, he was once again the good but awe-inspiring father before whom she had trembled in her childhood. She was once again fearing his displeasure, though he had never in the whole course of his life expressed even a transient disapproval of her with harshness.

There was little conversation at the dinner-table. Of the one topic which engrossed the thoughts of the parents and their child, no one of the three cared to speak in the hearing of servants; and, when the mind is full of a painful subject, it is not easy to manufacture trivial table-talk. The dismal and silent meal was in its last stage, and Sir James Darling had filled his glass with port for the second time, when a servant, entering the dining-room, brought Lottie the letter which we have perused.

Having, with a speechless movement of her head, asked her father's permission to open the envelope at once, the girl read the note, and reperused it deliberately. And then, thinking that her father had better see the epistle, she handed it to him without a word.

"A very appropriate letter—in every respect the letter of a young man of right principles and honorable sentiments," he observed, stiffly, when he had slowly studied the note. After a pause, the small man added, with a less freezing benignity, "Whatever may be the result of this grievous catastrophe, I am confident that Albert's conduct will justify our high opinion of him. My dear Mary, you should read what Albert says with equal delicacy and dutifulness."

This speech was meant to afford Lottie gratification, and it did not fail in its purpose, though her heart fluttered with a chilling sensation at the opening words, "Whatever may be the result." Was it possible that the grievous catastrophe could have any worse result than a brief postponement—say for a whole year, or even two years—of her wedding?

"He will like to hear that you approve the letter, papa," she observed. "May I tell him what you say? I shall send him a short reply by the messenger, who is waiting for an answer."

"I will write him a line or two, which you can inclose in your note, Lottie."

"Thank you, papa—that is very kind of you."

"And now, my dear Mary," observed the judge, pompously, when he had drunk his second glass of port, "we will go off at once to the library, for we have a great many letters to write, so that they may be posted at Hampton to-morrow, in time for the early mail. Henry may bring my wine and glass to my writing-table. Let me go to work at once. When you have written your reply to Albert, come to me in the library for my few lines."

On entering his chamber of study, from which the rays of the falling sun had been excluded, Sir James seated himself at his desk-table, on which a shaded lamp threw an artfully disposed light; and dipping his pen in ink, he prepared to write "the line or two" to Albert.

"Be very kind to him, James," Mary Darling entreated.

"There is no need," Sir James replied, in his stateliest fashion, looking up from his desk, "for you, Mary, to urge me to be properly considerate to our young friend."

"I know that, James. But, indeed, you must be very kind. Poor boy, he is to be pitied, even more than Lottie; and I am sure his beautiful letter deserves a generous response."

Declining to notice this second entreaty for especial kindness, Sir James Darling, who had donned a pair of spectacles, lowered his face to his blotting-pad, and wrote thus on a sheet of note-paper:

"You are quite right, my dear Albert, in supposing that the postponement of your marriage would be one of the necessary consequences of the sad affair of this morning; and you were very right in urging my dear child to commit herself unreservedly to my authority. Your counsel to her, and the very appropriate terms in which it is given, accord altogether with my good opinion of your principles and discretion. It is needless to say that we here are all deeply affected by a calamity that concerns us almost as nearly as yourself. Receive my warmest assurances of sympathy; and, my dear Albert, convey assurances of the same kind from me and Lady Darling to your worthy father. Yours very sincerely,

"JAMES DARLING."

"Perhaps you would like to see what I have said," observed the writer, handing the note to his wife.

"Oh, James," moaned Mary, "do write more kindly."

"Is it not kind enough?"

"Indeed, indeed it is not, James. You give no assurance that the postponement will be only for a short time, nor any hint that his loss of wealth will only heighten Lottie's devotion to him, and strengthen the ties of affection which bind him to us. You draw a hard, unfeeling distinction between *him* and *us*, as though *he* and *we* were not already one and the same family."

"Precisely what I meant to do, Mary," replied Sir James, with magisterial coldness. "Under the circumstances, it is consolatory to know that we are not yet one family."

A look of alarm came to Mary Darling's face at these words. It was the look of a timid, gentle creature, startled and frightened by a terrible discovery.

"Surely, surely, James," she ejaculated fervidly, "you would not dismiss him, and separate him from Lottie forever, simply because he has become poor?"

"Certainly not, my dear," Sir James answered firmly, but without emotion, the quiet steadiness of his wiry voice indicating clearness of purpose and resoluteness. "I should not think of breaking off the engagement because of his poverty. Things have gone too far for me to regard loss of fortune as a sufficient reason for telling our girl to dismiss him. But there may arise circumstances which would decide me to take that extreme step."

"Oh, James," Mary Darling pleaded, blushing slightly, as with a feeling of shame and penitence she bade her husband remember that they were peculiarly bound to be true to Albert in his season of adversity, "we may not forget that our ready countenance of his addresses to Lottie gives him a title to no ordinary measure of generosity from us. If he was quick in coming forth to seek our daughter, we showed no reluctance in welcoming him to Arleigh."

"True, my dear. I shall bear in mind what

you refer to," rejoined the husband, with the composure and courtesy that he always displayed when he was most bent on bearing down opposition. "He shall never have reason to complain of my generosity. But should it appear that Mr. Guerdon, the elder, has forfeited his title to social respect by abetting or conniving at his partner's flagitious proceedings, my wish to be generous to our young friend must be restrained by proper concern for the honor of the family—by regard for the good fame of *all* my children. I have sons, who should not be made to blush for their sister's alliance with dishonored people. Lottie is very dear to me—but she is not my only child. Moreover, Mary, it would not be for her happiness, in the long run, to be linked to a man whose name had become a reproach."

"But there is no imputation on Mr. Guerdon."

"Not at present. It is, however, certain that his partner is a prodigious scoundrel."

"Mr. Scrivener's villainy does not touch Albert's honor."

"Not if his father has had no part in it."

"Even then, James, who are we that *we* should visit the sins of the father on the son?"

"We are parents, my dear Mary, and bound to provide for the welfare of all our offspring at any sacrifice of our own feelings."

During this conversation Mary Darling's countenance was overtaken by a sadness that never left it. The gentle melancholy, which for a brief season had disappeared on the revival of her drooping spirits, re-occupied the pale, worn face of the prematurely aging lady. The lights of joy passed quietly from it forever, and, like a dutiful woman awakening from a pleasant dream that had for a short while lured her into idleness, she bestirred herself to accomplish the work assigned to her by misfortune.

"Let us begin to write the letters," she said.

"Let me see; shall I write to Sarah?"

"Yes; write to your sister-in-law at Nice. The letter will perhaps reach them before they have started. But to give them every chance of timely intelligence, I will direct a line to my brother at his Paris hotel, and another to him at the Calais hotel. If we can not prevent them from starting, we must stop them on the road. It would worry us both to have them here under the present circumstances."

Three minutes later, when she entered the library, Lottie saw her father and mother plying their pens quickly—her papa at his escritoire, her mamma at the large table.

"I have come for your note to Albert, papa."

"Here it is, my dear girl."

Glancing furtively at her husband and daughter, as the latter took the note from his hand, Mary Darling was relieved to see that he put the "line or two" into a closed envelope, so that Lottie should not see it.

Re-entering the room in another minute, when she had dispatched the note for Albert, Lottie took a seat at the large table, opposite to

her mother, saying, "Let me help you, mamma. All this trouble may not be taken for me, while I do nothing to diminish it. Anyhow, I can write to my brides-maids and Miss Constantine."

Lottie had no intention to play the heroine; and she was agreeably surprised by the warmth and emphasis with which both her parents commended her for what they called her "brave conduct."

So Lottie, for a few minutes comforted by her parents' praise almost into indifference to her disappointment, went to work on a packet of note-paper. Like the epistles thrown off by the senior scribes, her letters were brief and to the point; and, ere the time-piece over the library door struck the hour of midnight, she had penned the requisite intelligence to several persons besides Miss Constantine, and the girls who had promised to wait upon her at her marriage.

Sir James and Lady Darling had been no less industrious. And as the twelfth stroke was given by the clock, they also laid down their pens, and congratulated themselves on the completion of their depressing task.

"That will do," said the judge, when he had counted the letters and tied them in three packages, after reading their directions. "No one has been forgotten whom we ought to remember. To-morrow I will be up early, catch the 7.50 train at Owleybury, and post the letters at Hammerhampton, so that they will be off to London by the midday mail. And now to bed, for we are tired! Ah, Mary, my dear, how tired you look! And you, too, Lottie, are ready for your pillow. Kiss me, my child—my good, brave child—and be off to bed."

Feeling again almost at ease with the father, under whose eyes she had trembled with fear before dinner, Lottie kissed him, and then, turning to her mother, gave her a longer and more caressing embrace.

There was not a tear in the eyes of either of the women as they bade each other farewell for the night.

Nor did Lottie cry herself to sleep. Excitement and work had so thoroughly fatigued her that she fell into a deep slumber almost before she had composed herself on her couch. But when the bright sun of the summerly morning roused the poor girl, a vivid recollection of the events of the previous day drew from her an exclamation of anguish, and caused her to weep passionately. It was not grief alone for ascertained calamity that subdued her fortitude. The fear that held her was more agonizing than her sorrow for what had happened only yesterday. A dread had seized her that the worst was still to be learned; that her present disappointment was but the forerunner of unutterable woe. Yesterday having deferred her wedding, might not to-day produce a sharper grief? She had already in a few short hours passed from gladness to gloom. Could it be that in a few short days she would pass from wretchedness to despair? Poor girl, it was thus that she

began the day which followed the postponement of her marriage; it was thus that she began many later days with bitter tears.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAY AFTER THE CRASH.

SIR JAMES DARLING and Albert went to Hammerhampton, on the morning after the fall of the bank, by the same early train; but, happening to get seats in two different carriages, they could not exchange words until they greeted each other at the Hammerhampton Station. In shaking hands with his son-in-law elect, and bidding him good-morning, the judge was polite, without being cordial. If not frigid and studiously distant, his manner was stiff, cautious, and unsympathetic. Adding no word to his written expressions of regret for the previous day's misfortune, and forbearing to make any reference to Mr. Guerdon, senior, beyond a civil inquiry for his health, Sir James spoke directly of the steps he had taken, and would take, for the postponement of the wedding. Saying how he and Lady Darling and Lottie had worked with their pens from 8.30 to midnight, he held up the letter-bag which he carried in his right hand, adding, almost cheerily,

"And now I'll drive to the post-office, on my way to my court, and post the letters myself."

If he felt distaste for the business, he did not show it. In reply to Albert's inquiry for Lottie's health, Sir James reported that, though profoundly shocked by what had taken place, and naturally disappointed at the delay of her marriage, she was bearing up bravely, and was as well as any one could expect her to be under the afflicting circumstances. Her father thought that perfect rest and quietude would be beneficial for her; and he advised Albert to keep away from Arleigh Manor for the next two or three days; or, at least, if he went there, to be careful to say nothing that would aggravate Lottie's anxiety, or occasion Lady Darling further distress.

Respecting which advice, Albert asked whether he was to regard it as a prohibition, or only as a suggestion. Of course he would not approach Arleigh Manor in defiance of Sir James's wish that he should keep away altogether for a few days; but he hoped that he might be allowed to see Lottie before night.

"A prohibition, my dear Albert! Not a bit of it," Sir James replied, with a distant approach to kindness, seeing that he might with safety be more cordial to the young friend who exhibited a proper disposition to obey orders. "My suggestion is only a suggestion, and nothing more. You can't suppose that any one at Arleigh wishes to see you less often there. I was only thinking of what would be best for my dear wife and daughter, who, after the terrible agitation and labor of last night, are in

urgent want of repose. Well, well, let us say that you give them another twenty-four hours, in which to recover their scattered spirits and energy. Don't call this evening; but come over to-morrow evening, unless you hear from me to the contrary. Eh? Then I'll tell Lottie that she may expect to see you to-morrow evening. If you can come over for dinner, there will be a hearty welcome, and a knife and fork for you. But good-bye. Here, I'll take this cab. God bless you, my dear boy! Remember me to your father. By-the-bye, you may, perhaps, like to tell him that, as far as my trifling account is concerned, the stoppage of the bank will occasion me no serious inconvenience."

But in spite of Sir James Darling's assurance to the contrary, it was obvious to Albert that at least one of the chief residents of Arleigh would prefer him to be a less frequent visitor at the manor-house. The young man had duly observed every trick of manner and verbal artifice by which Lottie's father had kept him at a distance, and excluded him from the girl's home for at least another day, without showing him discourtesy or positive unkindness. It did not escape Albert that the judge, who had hitherto neglected no opportunity for courting his companionship, omitted to offer him a seat in his cab, though the direct route to the post-office and the County Court was through George Street. But he felt no resentment at the signs of coldness, and caution, and selfish purpose in the demeanor of Lottie's father, whom he had never for a single moment regarded as a hero, and who, moreover, might be excused for feeling and showing chagrin at the altered circumstances of his child's accepted suitor. Indeed, having no suspicion of the pains which Lottie's parents had taken to catch him, and, with the partial blindness of a lover, having seen only his own part of the game in which he had been a winner, he felt that he had imposed himself and his misfortunes on an otherwise prosperous family. It seemed to him that he owed Sir James and Lady Darling an apology for making them the sharers of his private misadventure, and that they would be very generous if they forgave him completely for the injury he had unwittingly done them.

Albert spent the whole day at Hammerhampton, conferring with Mr. Jacob Coleman and several of his father's principal creditors; giving Mr. Greaves instructions on sundry matters of business; and arranging for a meeting of the many persons to whom the bankrupt's estate was indebted. In the intervals between the receptions of callers in George Street, he glanced at the local and London papers, and learned from them that the directors of public opinion were not disposed to judge either partner of the fallen house with leniency. The morning's edition of the *Hammerhampton Iron Times*, after inveighing fiercely against the absent Scrivener, ridiculed the notion that John Guerdon should not be regarded as morally ac-

countable for the fugitive's reckless speculations. The senior partner must have known what his junior was doing with the resources of the bank. He had certainly connived at the swindler's proceedings; and it would be well for him, since he had not fled beyond the reach of justice, if it should appear that he had not actively and knowingly co-operated in them. The London journalists were more temperate and cautious. They were waiting for facts, and would suspend their judgment of the bankruptcy until they should receive full information respecting its most suspicious features. As it was, they would only stigmatize the collapse of a once prosperous and well-established bank as the deplorable result of gross mismanagement. This was the substance of London opinion concerning an event which was less interesting in Lombard Street than in the Great Yard. But the phrases of the studiously cautious journalists indicated to Albert that they were preparing to use much stronger and hotter language, as soon as they should find themselves in a position to use it with security.

From Mr. Coleman, who had for years known as much about the doings of Guerdon & Scrivener as the junior partner had allowed Guerdon to know of them, Albert learned enough to convince him that, in regarding the bank as fallen beyond recovery, he had not taken too gloomy a view of affairs. He had a still surer and larger source of information in the books of the bankrupt house, which were exhibited to him by the chief clerk. The later entries of the ledger displayed the course of ruin to Albert, whose commercial education enabled him to see the meaning of statements and counter-statements of arithmetical figures, which would have been almost unintelligible to the majority of young men fresh from their training at Eton and Oxford.

It is needless to weary the peruser of these pages with the details of Mr. Scrivener's proceedings. The fugitive was a clever scoundrel, of a common type of industrious rascality; and the measures by which he had wrecked a fine business and utterly ruined his addle-pated benefactor present no very exceptional aspects or instances of knavery. A keen-witted and ambitious young man, who had received a better education than is ordinarily given to clerks, he entered the service of John Guerdon, shortly after the latter, at the opening of life's middle term, succeeded to the sound and rapidly growing business which his shrewd father had raised from an insignificant concern to an important house. John Guerdon had not long occupied the place bequeathed to him by his sire when his vanity and love of patronizing his neighbors exposed him to the arts of several smooth-tongued adventurers, who, by flattering his foibles, of which self-esteem was the most perilous, induced him to assist their rotten speculations with large loans. At this time Mr. Scrivener won his partnership by doing his

employer an important service. Prudently using certain information which he had gained by craft, he saved the bank from perilous embarrassment, and rescued a considerable portion of its capital from the clutches of adventurers. John Guerdon was not the man to forget to reward such fidelity in a servant. Moreover, his selfishness instigated him to attach to himself by strong ties the clerk who had preserved him from great loss, if not from absolute ruin. Doubtless his vanity caused him to overrate the sagacity of the man who had proved himself John Guerdon's superior in shrewdness and wisdom. It was natural in John Guerdon to magnify thus egotistically the endowments of his own instructor. Moreover, with all his arrogance and overweening self-esteem, the banker had a secret knowledge of some of his deficiencies—a vague sense, rather than a clear perception, that, for his safety against the swindling projectors and blacklegs of the Great Yard, he required the protection of an able partner. Hence gratitude and self-interest combined to make him exalt Gimlett Scrivener. In doing so, he never admitted to himself that he wished to place himself under Mr. Scrivener's care. He persuaded himself that he was only rendering a proper though munificent acknowledgment of a benefit, and was at the same time attaching to his interests a subordinate who could be trusted to look after matters of importance during his superior's absence. He conceived also that, after his elevation, Mr. Scrivener would be content to remain his obsequious servant, and to honor him as the patron "who had made him."

John Guerdon soon discovered that, if he had appreciated rightly Mr. Scrivener's cleverness and fidelity, he had rendered less than justice to the gentleman's self-respect and appetite for authority. On becoming his former master's partner and equal, Mr. Scrivener laid aside the submissiveness appropriate to his previous position, and showed that nature had qualified him to govern as well as to obey. Not that he exhibited any thing like insolence to his benefactor, or systematically wounded his feelings. On the contrary, he humored his senior's self-love, and responded with exemplary patience to his frequent ebullitions of temper. Mr. Scrivener never annoyed any one, unless policy required him to do so; and his interests required, above all things, that he should live on friendly terms with Mr. Guerdon until that gentleman should be altogether in his power. But from the date of their first articles of partnership, John Guerdon lost all command over the man to whose stronger will and greater knowledge he was compelled to yield on some question of business at least once in every week. By degrees the abler man became more and more absolute in George Street; but to the last he rarely forgot to treat his partner with a show of politeness.

In justice to Mr. Scrivener, rather than to his partner, it must be admitted that John

Guerdon selected for his coadjutor a man of no mean capacity. Though Mr. Scrivener proved eventually a flagrant knave, and John Guerdon was his chief victim, it may be questioned whether the former did not suffer from his partner's deficiencies quite as much injury as he inflicted on his senior. Had he been matched with an ally who was his equal in intelligence and resoluteness, the younger man might have been restrained from the courses in which he came to ruin while ruining others. His extravagant confidence in his own cleverness, and his perilous eagerness to arrive at wealth by brilliant *coups*, instead of by an infinite number of small successes, might have been corrected by a comrade of different temper and average mental capacity. A clear-headed, prudent, and firm partner would have "kept him straight." As it was, in finding a mere tool for his ambition, instead of a competent associate, Gimlett Scrivener only acquired a weapon wherewith to commit suicide. In truth, each of the two men required to be protected from himself. If John Guerdon needed to be saved from his own stupidity, Mr. Scrivener needed to be preserved from the forces of a delusive imagination and sanguine temperament. A more ill-assorted pair it would be difficult to imagine. Each was deficient in qualities which the other especially required in an ally. Mr. Scrivener's chief deficiencies were moral failings; Mr. Guerdon lacked every requisite mental endowment, and all the necessary moral qualifications, with the single exception of honesty. John Guerdon was no rogue. But, while his pitiful incapacity placed him altogether at the mercy of an unscrupulous comrade, it converted into instruments for his own undoing the very powers for which his partner was chiefly commendable.

Bearing in mind the contrary natures of the two men, readers can imagine for themselves the course by which the partners came to ruin. There is no need to tell how the younger of the two, bent on rapidly enriching himself, disdained the comparatively modest gains of his proper business, and endeavored to gratify his ambition by hazardous speculation. Nor is it needful to describe how, on the failure of successive projects, and as his power over his weak ally became greater, he used more and more rashly for his private undertakings the resources of the bank and of his partner. Such details would only burden the narrative, without contributing to its romantic interest.

Of course Mr. Gimlett Scrivener had not left behind him any adequate records of his many transactions in which his partner had no share. All that Albert learned respecting the state of affairs in George Street was gained from the books in Mr. Coleman's custody. The view which they afforded was gloomy, but not devoid of consolation. It was obvious that the bank was gone beyond all hope of recovery. Not that its liabilities were in a prodigious excess of the resources available for the satisfaction of its creditors, but because the circum-

stances of the collapse had given an irremediable shock to the credit of the house. But for the effect of Mr. Scrivener's flight and ascertained defalcations, the books showed no reason why the business should not be re-opened. On the contrary, it was apparent that the bank would not have fallen, and might have survived the various causes of its embarrassment, had it not been for the junior partner's scandalous and alarming disappearance, which was the immediate cause of "the run." For three years the business had been carried on with an inadequate "reserve," and had been struggling with serious though surmountable difficulties. But many a concern of the same kind had, under skillful management, and in the absence of a sudden and overpowering strain on its powers, outlived far greater troubles, and in the course of years enriched its proprietors. The stoppage was due to a panic, the panic to the collapse of a single individual, who, though the chief power in the business, was not himself the bank.

Anyhow, it could not be asserted that the senior partner had egregiously abused public confidence. He had muddled his affairs, and been a swindler's dupe; but he was no reckless trader or fraudulent bankrupt. His honor was untarnished, though he had lost his money and professional reputation. Taking a hopeful view of affairs, Albert thought that the assets of the business, together with the sum attainable by the sale of Earl's Court, and the sum which some rival bank might offer for the "connection" of the fallen firm, would be almost enough to pay the creditors twenty shillings in the pound. Even if the creditors should lose something—say five shillings in the pound—they would, on the subsidence of passion, say nothing worse of John Guerdon than that he had lost his business and money through want of commercial capacity.

Taking this view, which was justified by the books, Albert was surprised that Gimlett Scrivener had not persevered a few months longer in his desperate game; indeed, he almost attributed moderation to the gambler who had fled the country, while the bank was still in a position to afford him means for staving off the day of ruin and exposure, if not for carrying out his projects to a successful issue. But when he was thus inclined to regard the speculator's withdrawal as premature, Albert was not aware of the magnitude of the fugitive's liabilities, or of the felonious nature of some of his acts. Before the end of the week, he saw that Mr. Scrivener had retired none too soon for his safety. On the contrary, the scoundrel had displayed marvelous coolness and daring in remaining at Hammerhampton to so recent a day.

CHAPTER V.

ALBERT RUNS UP TO LONDON.

At the close of his long day's work in George Street, Albert returned to Earl's Court, carrying with him more than forty letters which had arrived at the bank for his father. As all these epistles were addressed to "John Guerdon, Esq.," and several of them were marked "private," Albert thought his father had better open them himself. The letters which had come to the bank with the address of the firm upon them had been opened and duly answered by Mr. Coleman, who was authorized, under certain circumstances, to open the letters of the firm in the absence of his employers.

The hour for dinner having arrived when Albert dismounted from his horse at Earl's Court, it was decided that he and his father should not read the budget of papers until they had dispatched the meal, which the father desired for his diversion, and the son needed for his refreshment. Solitude and idleness had created in the elder a yearning for the excitement of conversation. Already familiar with his disgrace, he asked for the news of the town, and the journals; and, in referring to his son's recent occupation, he betrayed at times almost as much insensibility as eagerness for gossip. He had arrived at the period of life when men often exhibit a childish vehemence of grief at new misfortunes, and then, with childish submissiveness and fickleness of temper, adapt themselves quickly to their altered circumstances. Yesterday he had sobbed and wept over the disaster, whose details now afforded him an almost agreeable entertainment. He surprised Albert by asking what the papers said of the bankruptcy, and on hearing the reluctant admission that their comments were neither generous to the firm nor sympathetic for its senior partner, he astonished his son in a still higher degree by expressing his contempt for public opinion. "Pooh!" he exclaimed, contemptuously, "what care I for the abuse of a pack of scribblers? I am an old man, and there are scarce ten persons left in the whole world for whose good word or ill word I care a rush." But the boast was so qualified by the previous convulsion of body and change of countenance that it did not mislead Albert, who appreciated its old-boyish bravado, and saw that the veteran, in spite of his almost shameless indifference to disgrace which was a few hours old, felt acutely, for a few minutes, each fresh demonstration of his disrepute. That he would succumb to the mere burden of his great misfortunes, and die of slow distress at the overwhelming vastness of the entire bulk of his accumulated troubles, there was no longer any ground for fearing. But Albert, who had observed the sudden spasm and crimson blush which preceded the utterance of disdain for scribblers, was reasonably afraid that the man of many years and broken health might encounter death in one of his equally sharp and transient paroxysms of anguish and anger.

Of the forty and more letters which the two men opened after dinner, as they sat over their wine, some were from writers ignorant of the crash, and a few were notes of condolence, but at least half of them were epistles that reminded their recipient of his fall in more or less painful terms. There were insolently formal notes from business men, who wished for prompt information respecting the amount which they would probably lose from the fall of the mismanaged bank; and there were vulgarly vindictive letters from angry creditors, who upbraided the broken banker for his incompetence and treachery. Each of these insulting missives brought the scarlet fury for a few moments to John Guerdon's face. But there were two notes which caused him especial pain. One of these came from Blanche Heathcote, who, on the first intelligence of the flight of one of her trustees, and the bankruptcy of both, wrote to John Guerdon in the following terms:

"DEAR MR. GUERDON, — Pardon me for troubling you about my affairs at a moment when you are doubtless assailed with a thousand irritating letters, and are overwhelmed with anxieties. I am horrified by the intelligence of what has taken place at Hammerhampton, and need some assurance that I am no participator in the general misfortune. Of course I am aware that my money ought to be all safe in the Consols; but still trustees sometimes exceed their powers in dealing with trust funds, and, though I have the most perfect confidence in your honor, I am naturally alarmed for myself, by what the papers tell me of Mr. Scrivener's fraudulent behavior. If there is bad news for me, let me know the worst at once; for if a young person, who has been taught to regard herself as an heiress, must turn governess or needlewoman, it is as well that she lose no time in looking out for employment. So let me have a line by return of post. Again apologizing for thus pestering you at this grievous crisis, and begging you to accept my cordial expressions of sympathy for your misfortunes, I remain, my dear Mr. Guerdon,

"Your affectionate and grateful ward,

"BLANCHE HEATHCOTE.

"P.S.—Will my Consols be in any way liable for the debts of the bank? Don't forget to answer this question. I am dying to know."

"By heavens!" screamed the old banker, flinging the open letter on the table, when he had mastered its contents, "it is not enough for me to be a bankrupt, but the world must make me out a swindler, scoundrel, common thief as well! Blanche Heathcote wants to have my assurance that I am not an utter villain. Lord! Lord! her father, poor Jack Heathcote, thought me a fit man to have the half-charge of his child's money. She might have waited till—"

A convulsion of the muscles of his chest and

throat here seized the infuriated trustee, who could not speak another word until he had spent three minutes in coughing himself purple, and gasping for hard life.

"My dear father, Albert expostulated, when he had glanced at the offensive letter, and saw that his sire was again accessible to reason, "she draws a very clear line between you and Scrivener, and, while assigning her alarm to his notorious rascality, expresses undiminished confidence in your honor. Her letter, I must say, exhibits the good feeling and delicacy of a gentlewoman, although it was penned in a panic."

"How the devil," screamed the victim of distrust, "could she imagine me rogue enough to move the money and employ it in my own business? She is an intelligent woman, and knows enough of business to be aware that the money couldn't be moved without my permission and signature. She might as well have taken me at her father's valuation until she could prove me a villain."

The last sentence of this speech was spoken in a lower and less wrathful tone—a voice of reproachful indignation and self-pity, which Albert heard with relief, as it indicated that the paroxysm of rage was subsiding, and that the sufferer would soon be himself again, after shedding, perhaps, a few tears of senile grief.

But John Guerdon had scarcely recovered his outward composure, when the smouldering fires of his breast burst forth again in flaming wrath and furious imprecations on the head of the writer of the next and final letter of the budget.

"Sir," wrote Mr. Samuel Heathcote, gunsmith, of Tower Hill and the Strand, London, and Pipe Lodge, Richmond, "as the uncle of your ward, Miss Blanche Heathcote, and the person to whom she will come for advice on learning how her father's friends have justified his confidence in them, I beg that you will inform me by telegraph in what real or other securities you and your absconding partner have invested the £63,428 18s. 2d. which you realized three years since by the sale of the stock, previously invested in Consols, and standing in your names, as trustees of my said niece. It has only just come to my knowledge that stock was sold by you and your co-trustee. Had I heard of the matter before, you would have heard from me sooner. I remain, sir, with whatever respect for you that you deserve,

"SAMUEL HEATHCOTE."

A harsh, overbearing, vulgar man, who had quarreled with his brother, and displayed inordinate chagrin at the consequent omission of his name from John Heathcote's last will, the writer of this letter had on several occasions incensed John Guerdon by exhibitions of implacable animosity. Any epistle from so insolent an enemy would have been unacceptable to the fallen capitalist; but this letter, so staggering in its facts, and so truculent in its expressions, was

an outrage which nearly killed him outright with the violence of the emotions that it occasioned him.

"It is a lie! a dark, hellish lie, penned only to insult and infuriate me!" screamed the old man, springing to his feet, and tottering about the room, as he poured torrents of unreportable oaths and imprecations on the heart, hearth, fame, life, of the vindictive gunsmith. "The money is safe in the Consols, where we put it within two years of poor Jack Heathcote's death. The slandering villain has had no intelligence of its removal, for the money is *there*—*there* in the Consols! The liar invented the lie, and then used it as a pretext for his insinuations against my honesty. Pooh! the wretched liar's aim is to goad me into answering him. I'll answer him! I'll answer him! But he sha'n't humiliate me into giving him my word that I am an honest man. Sam Heathcote is not my judge yet. But I'll tell him to mind his own business, and remind him *why* his brother did not care to trust him with *Blanche's* money. I'll tweak his nose with a reply which will make him wish that he had left me alone."

While his father raved in this style, staggering up and down the dining-room, and swearing out his fury like the proverbial trooper, Albert gave the letter his careful and painful consideration. It appeared to him incredible that the scribe had penned the insulting and libelous missive on the strength of a mere fiction of his spiteful imagination. It was highly improbable that he had received no information of the alleged sale of stock. The information might be erroneous, the sale might never have taken place; but Albert, in spite of his indignation at Samuel Heathcote's brutal tone, was too cool to accept his father's mode of accounting for the accusation. Mr. Heathcote must have spoken on authority of some sort. On the other hand, it was possible that Scrivener had effected the sale, and transferred the money, without his partner's knowledge, by means of a forged signature to a power of attorney. In that case, it was quite credible that the London gunsmith might have made inquiries at the Bank of England on the news of Guerdon & Scrivener's failure, and have written by the light of official information. It was a horrible thing to imagine. But the fear seized Albert that the allegation was only too true, and that, as a forger's victim, his father would appear to have violated a sacred trust, and would be universally denounced as a prodigious scoundrel. There was, indeed, no Fraudulent Trustees Act at the time of John Guerdon's bankruptcy; but social opinion awarded to a fraudulent trustee the penalty of indelible shame. Though no judge declared such a delinquent guilty of felony, society put the felon's brand on him, and rendered him as infamous as any convict enduring slavery in a penal settlement. The ignominy of the offender was shared by his children, so that honest men avoided them as creatures of criminal quality.

As he realized vividly the hideous position to which Samuel Heathcote's letter pointed, Albert saw that, as the son of a man believed to be guilty of an enormous breach of trust, he could not hope that Sir James Darling would allow him to wed Lottie. He saw also that, clothed with domestic disrepute and social scorn, he would be no fit mate for a girl of stainless birth and honest story. Ay, more, rather than draw Lottie down to his degree of shame, and impose his degradation upon her, he felt that, at the cost of his reason or his life, he would separate himself from her. Even at this time of ghastly fears and hideous imaginations he was not selfish. So far as his relations with Lottie were concerned, he thought much less of himself than of her; and ere his mind had recurred to her, he thought of and for his father, thus threatened with a blow which, depriving him of his good name when he had already lost his purse, would leave him poor indeed.

In either case, it was important that he and his father should know whether Samuel Heathcote's assertion had a basis of truth. Blanche's uncle could not be properly contradicted and silenced, unless they could disprove his statement by the testimony of the bank. On the other hand, if the stock had been fraudulently sold, it was urgently needful that, for the vindication of his honor, John Guerdon should lose no time in denouncing the transaction, and declaring that he had not authorized the sale.

Afraid to say any thing which should exasperate his father yet more violently, or suggest to his mind the hideous possibility that his assailant's statement was true as to its main fact, Albert concealed his agonizing fears, while making a proposal, in order that he might learn as quickly as possible whether they were groundless. His purpose was to go at once to London, and ascertain at the Bank of England whether the stock had been transferred. If to his infinite relief he should find that the alleged sale had never taken place, he would proceed instantly to Samuel Heathcote; and silence him with a crushing answer. On the other hand, should it appear that Mr. Scrivener had obtained possession of his ward's fortune, the journey to London would not have been bootless. It would have ascertained by the speediest means the perpetration of a villainy which it concerned his father's honor to publish without a moment's needless delay. It would be absurd and highly impolitic to give a public denial to Samuel Heathcote's private accusation if its main assertion were false. But, if the allegation were true, it was obvious that John Guerdon should not lose a minute in declaring to the whole world his innocence of every kind of complicity in his partner's crime.

When John Guerdon, after storming and scolding till he was hoarse and giddy, dropped from sheer exhaustion into silence and his easy-chair, Albert seized the opportunity for making a prudent suggestion.

"No doubt, father, the man is an odious ruffian."

"Ay, Alb, and a liar—a hellish liar!"

"No doubt—no doubt, sir. He is all you say, and worse."

"He is a black, Satanic slanderer!" roared the old man.

"But ruffian and slanderer though he is, he must be answered. At this crisis we can not afford to let a calumny go unanswered. Even at the sacrifice of our pride and sense of dignity, we must silence Mr. Heathcote."

"Where is your spirit, Alb?" the veteran expostulated, pathetically, in the milder and whining tone which indicated the subsidence of the storm. "Would you have your old gray-headed father go cap in hand to Samuel Heathcote, who in time past was none too honest and nice in money matters, and say, 'Indeed, sir, you are mistaken in thinking me a thief; here is my certificate of honesty, signed by a clerk of the Bank of England, testifying that I have not stolen your niece's money?' Are you going to order me to eat that kind of dirt?"

"No, sir. Believe me, you shall undergo no such indignity as you imagine. My wish is that you should silence the man without either seeing him or condescending to write him a line."

"That's what I mean to do, Alb," rejoined the veteran, stubbornly. "I mean to silence him by holding my tongue." Then, reverting quickly to his previous decision, John Guerdon declared again that, while answering not a word to his defamer's accusation, he would "tweak his nose" with an abusive letter.

"I agree with you, sir, that it would ill become you to exchange words with the fellow on the subject of the trust. But he must be answered, lest his mendacious talk should hurt you and me; and as it concerns me quite as much as you that he should be silenced, allow me to muzzle him."

"You! ay, you? I had not thought of that," John Guerdon rejoined, assentingly.

The proposal that his son should eat the dirt, and abase himself so far as to hold an interview with Samuel Heathcote, being obviously less repugnant to the veteran than the bare thought of undergoing the humiliation in his own person, Albert at once disclosed his purpose in terms so decisive and resolute that his father could only agree with it.

"I must settle this matter at once," he said. "I must be quicker than post or telegraph. I must be at the Bank of England to-morrow by opening hour, and as soon as I have ascertained that no incredible error or confusion at the bank is the cause of Mr. Heathcote's alleged belief, I must go at once to the man himself, and teach him a lesson in veracity and good manners. In all probability I shall be back again in time for seven o'clock dinner."

"Can't manage it so quickly, Alb," returned the father, wonderfully soothed by the slight

diversion given to his thoughts by Albert's statement of intention. Already the young man's project of running up to town, and crushing the obnoxious gunsmith, had become a mere question of time to his father. "At least, to manage it you must send over to Owleybury, and arrange for a special train to run into London before breakfast. And so you won't have long in bed."

"Pooh! no bed for me to-night, nor a special train to-morrow. I shall be off in ten minutes," replied Albert, taking out his watch as he spoke, and ascertaining that he still had time to catch the night up-mail train at Owleybury. In a trice he had rung the bell sharply. "Have the dog-cart and the brown mare round to the door," he said to the butler, who answered the summons. "Tell Nesling to look sharp, for I must catch the mail for London at Owleybury. He must see to his lamps, for there is no moon to-night, and it has clouded over."

As soon as the servant had retired with the order, Albert turned to his father, and said,

"You know Mr. Farncombe, of Lombard Street. He is one of the Governors of the Bank of England. Give me, sir, a line of introduction to him—it may be useful." And, by-the-way, put his private address on it—Park Lane, isn't it? for I had better see him before he will be going into the City. Write me only ten words, saying that I am your son, and want his assistance in an important matter. Write at once, my dear father, so that the note may be ready for me in five minutes."

Thus speaking, Albert left the dining-room quickly, to equip himself for his journey. In less than five minutes he re-appeared, with a small traveling-bag in his hand, and an overcoat on his arm. The mare and dog-cart were already at the door.

"Good-bye, sir," the young man said, putting his hands affectionately on his father's shoulders, as he gave the old man a filial kiss. "Ah! this is the introduction to Mr. Farncombe? Thanks. Keep up your heart till you see me. You'll have enough occupation in answering those letters, and seeing Greaves and Coleman, who will be with you soon after breakfast to-morrow. Greaves will perhaps bring with him Sims or Vacheson, from Princes Street, Cheap-side. He says they are the men to look into the accounts for us, and he telegraphed to their office to-day. Of course you'll dispel Miss Blanche's alarm with a few kind words. As for Mr. Samuel Heathcote—leave him to me."

"Aigh! aigh!" ejaculated the veteran, vindictively. "Give it to him hot—devilish hot, Alb!"

Albert smiled pleasantly, as he answered, "Don't fear that I shall forget to punish him, sir. He shall have it hot."

"And strong—mind, hot and strong!"

"The dose shall be in accordance with the prescription. It shall be hot and strong."

"God bless you, my boy! You're a fine boy, Alb, and a great comfort to me."

Seeing that the veteran was giving way, under the combined excitements of port-wine and paternal emotion, and the nervous exhaustion consequent on successive fits of violent rage, Albert thought it best to run off, lest in another moment the old man should be exhibiting his agitation in an unseemly fashion before his servants.

"Thank you, father," he exclaimed, running across the hall to the open door, through which the yellow and crimson light of his gig lamps was visible. "And good-bye again, till dinner-time to-morrow."

"Yes, yes," the elder ejaculated, following the son to whom adversity and humiliation had in a few brief hours taught him to look for support, comfort, and guidance. "But don't disappoint me, Alb—do be back for dinner. It's your doing that you leave me now for so long. To-morrow evening I shall want you for a hundred matters; so do, do come back."

"Quick," said Albert, addressing the groom, and turning a deaf ear to his father's last words of querulous and anxious entreaty. "Let the mare trot her best, Nesling. She will do it, with three minutes and a half to spare, if you give her every chance."

The mare did her work with five minutes to spare; and, when Albert had taken his ticket for London, he had just time, before the arrival of the train, to pen and post to Sir James Darling this brief note:

"DEAR SIR JAMES,—I am off for town, and, as I shall not return to Earl's Court till late in the afternoon of to-morrow, it will be impossible for me to dine to-morrow at Arleigh, in accordance with your kind invitation. Tell dear Lottie how it grieves me to defer the pleasure of seeing her till the day after to-morrow. My best love to her and her dear mother, both of whom are continually in my mind. Heaven bless and protect them! My dear father is fairly well, but sadly harassed. Your affectionate
ALBERT GUERDON."

When Sir James Darling had read this note at his breakfast-table on the following morning, he put it into his waistcoat, and then observed frigidly to his tea-maker,

"Albert Guerdon is in London. He won't dine with us to-day."

Tears came to the eyes of the tea-maker at this announcement; and her pale, sad face trembled for a few seconds with the pain that seized her heart and agitated her whole body. But with a great effort Lottie suppressed her emotion.

After a pause, the brave girl said, timidly,

"Dear father, you'll let me see his note?"

"It contains little to interest you, my dear," was the cold reply, "except a line of remembrances to you and your mother. I should have shown you the letter had I thought it advisable to do so."

"But when will he come?"

"That must depend on the nature of the business which calls him to London."

Whereupon Sir James Darling rose from his chair, gave Lottie a formal kiss, and went off to Hammerhampton without showing her Albert's letter.

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

PHILIP FARNCOMBE, of 44 Park Lane, and Brookfield Lodge, county Surrey, in the "Court Guide," and of Lombard Street, in the "Commercial Directory," was equally well known in the east and west of the town. In the City he was a bill discounter; in Park Lane he was a connoisseur, a buyer of modern pictures, and a giver of excellent dinners to men who, like him, were bachelors, or rendered homage to celibacy by keeping their wives at a respectful distance. A handsome old man who belonged to two aristocratic clubs, and dressed in a careful style of exploded foppishness, he had friends in widely different circles of society. He was on gossiping terms with Cabinet ministers, and gave breakfasts to the notabilities of the London season. The Rothschilds and Barings addressed him by his Christian name with fraternal familiarity; and yet, when he strolled about town, staring at the windows of print-shops and china-shops, and strolling into auction-rooms, he would chat easily with clerks and petty tradesmen, and shake hands with mildewed gentlemen, whose dress betokened their extreme poverty. Knowing nearly every one in London, it was not wonderful that the wealthy bachelor, whose prosperity was sustained by his operations in the money-market, should number among his acquaintances the Boringdonshire banker.

No less a man of business than of pleasure, Philip Farncombe, Esq., J.P., D.L., F.R.S., was an early riser. If he enjoyed himself in Mayfair and his clubs in the afternoon, he never omitted to visit Lombard Street in the morning. And he was already breakfasting in a parlor of his town-house, when Albert Guerdon knocked and rang at the door of 44 Park Lane. Trained to witness strange occurrences with dignified composure, Mr. Farncombe's hall porter exhibited no surprise at the earliness of Albert's call. Accepting the gentleman's card and letter of introduction without emotion, the janitor sent them in at once to his master, and directed a second footman to conduct the visitor to a waiting-room.

Albert did not wait long for his audience. In less than two minutes he was shown into the breakfast parlor, where Mr. Farncombe was taking his morning meal, surrounded by costly paintings and works of sculpture.

Seeing at a glance that his early visitor was a gentleman with personal titles to courteous entreatment, Mr. Farncombe, who was civil to every one, rose from his chair, and having

shaken John Guerdon's son cordially by the hand, pressed him to take a seat and breakfast. Declining the latter part of the invitation, on the plea that he had already breakfasted, Albert took a chair, and said that he would not trouble his entertainer to attend to the business which had brought him so untimely a caller until he had also breakfasted.

"Don't wait, my dear sir," was Mr. Farncombe's rejoinder, "but talk away at once. To listen to you will help me to enjoy my second egg."

In half a dozen brief sentences, Albert stated the circumstances and object of his visit without uttering one superfluous word.

Smiling courteously, while he made an untimely speech that would have been very rude had it not been qualified by the complaisant smile and a polite tone, Mr. Farncombe, having listened with silent attentiveness to his visitor's clear statement, remarked,

"That's enough. Now I know all about your business. So you are John Guerdon's son. I can scarcely believe it, for you express yourself so clearly and precisely. You have a clear head and good address—two things which your father always wanted."

Flushing slightly at this disrespectful reference to his sire's failings, but keeping his temper, Albert replied,

"Now that my dear father has shown himself an inefficient man of business, the world, I fear, will not render justice to his many fine qualities."

Reminded by the dignified tone, rather than by the substance of these words, that his last utterance had been deficient in courtesy, Mr. Farncombe, being a gentleman, experienced no difficulty in apologizing frankly.

"You are quite right, sir," the old man observed; "I should not have said that to you. Pardon me, and let me atone for my bad manners by assuring you that I will do whatever you ask of me."

"My warmest thanks to you, Mr. Farncombe!"

"Well, let me see. You did not tell me how your father heard of the alleged sale of stock, which he declares can not have taken place."

"An old enemy wrote him a brutal letter, reproaching him with the transaction."

"And the old enemy is Miss Blanche Heathcote's uncle, Sam Heathcote, the gunsmith—eh?"

Evinced astonishment by a quick change of countenance, Albert answered,

"Yes, that was the man."

"Ah!" rejoined Mr. Farncombe, quietly, "he is a spiteful, ill-conditioned fellow, and I regret that I assisted him to discover a fact which he has used so ungenerously. But I can't disguise from you that he has told the truth. The news of Scrivener's flight and your father's bankruptcy had not been known an hour in the city, when Sam Heathcote (he is

one of my business connections) entered my Lombard Street parlor, and asked me to accompany him to the bank, and find out for him whether his niece's trustees had taken her money out of the Consols. I consented. We went over to the bank, and soon learned the truth. It is an ugly business. The stock was sold just three years since by Scrivener and your father."

"Not by my father," ejaculated Albert, who had turned ghastly white at this realization of his worst fear.

"I should have said," observed Mr. Farncombe, amending his statement, "that the bank has evidence that the stock was sold by the trustees. Of course, if your father can prove that he never authorized the sale, and that Scrivener is a forger, he will upset our evidence, and show—what every man of business knows—how easily gigantic frauds may be perpetrated by a small minority of the scoundrels—that is to say, by the scoundrels with *exceptional opportunities*."

"But, sir, you can't believe that my father had any share in the transaction of which he declares himself ignorant?"

"My dear young friend," Mr. Farncombe answered, kindly, "as my belief can not affect the value of the evidence, why ask about it? To tell you the truth, I have no belief in the matter. I am too old a man of business and of the world to believe or disbelieve any thing, except on the surest testimony. All I can say is that the stock was sold three years since, on the authority of a power of attorney, which bears what purports to be your father's signature. If that signature is spurious, the forger who executed it is a master of his art."

"Let me," Albert asked, in a voice of anguish and fervent entreaty, "see the power of attorney. I shall be able to demonstrate that the signature is a forgery. Am I asking you too much, sir, when I beg you to do me the same service that you rendered to Samuel Heathcote? Do enable me to see the power of attorney this very hour!"

Having considered for half a minute, Mr. Farncombe answered, coldly,

"Yes, I will do that for you. I should not be exceeding my privileges in letting you see the document which your father means to declare spurious. Yes, if that is all you want me to do, it shall be done this morning."

"Thank you, sir. When may I meet you at the bank?" Albert asked, rising to take his departure.

"We will go to the bank together."

"No, no, sir; you are too good, too generous, to a man of whom you know nothing save his shame!" Albert answered, passionately. "The son of a man suspected of having perpetrated an unutterable villainy is no fit person to accompany an honorable gentleman through the streets of London."

"Tut, tut! Be calm, my dear boy," the other returned, gently and compassionately.

"Yours is a hard case; but be brave and calm, there's a good boy."

Soothed by his companion's seasonable kindness, Albert dropped again into the chair which he had occupied during the interview.

"Oblige me," continued the master of the house, "by touching the bell-handle that is within a foot of your left hand. Thank you."

To the servant who answered the summons Mr. Farncombe said,

"I want the brougham directly; be quick, for I must drive to the City at once. Tell Arthur that I don't ride this morning, but he must bring my horse to Lombard Street, as usual, at 2.30."

On arriving at "the Bank," Mr. Farncombe led Albert to an office, where they examined, in the presence of a superior officer of the establishment, all the documents which had been preserved in Threadneedle Street as evidence relating to the sale of Blanche Heathcote's Consols. Albert saw the form whereby Mr. Dove, stock-broker, Warneford Court (of the firm of Green, Dove & Swainson), had applied for a power of attorney, for the use of Messrs. John Guerdon and Gimlett Scrivener, bankers, of George Street, Hammerhampton. He saw the usual evidence that the broker had made the application on the instruction of his client, Scrivener. His attention was called also to the official record of the notice, sent to John Guerdon, informing him that the power had been applied for. Then the power of attorney was placed in his hands. It was in every respect formal. There was the signature of Gimlett Scrivener, duly attested by Jacob Coleman and William Markworthy. Clearly written, in his father's full, free, and very legible handwriting, appeared the signature of John Guerdon, also duly attested by the same witnesses. The records of the transfer of the stock were of no interest, after the exhibition of this damnable power; but still they were placed under the eyes of Albert, who, obeying instructions given him by Mr. Farncombe on their way from Park Lane to Threadneedle Street, said nothing to reveal to the clerk in attendance that the several documents were being exhibited to John Guerdon's son.

In accordance with permission, ceremoniously sought and granted, Albert entered in his note-book the several dates of the documents, and the names and descriptions of the persons who attested his father's signature to the power of attorney.

When Albert had finished his inspection of the papers, the clerk withdrew from the room.

"Well?" Mr. Farncombe inquired of Albert, when they were again without a third companion.

"It is a perfect forgery. The signature is perfect. No wonder it imposed on the bank."

"You still think it a forgery?"

"I know it is a forgery! My father could not have forgotten his part in so important a transaction as the sale of the stock; and I have

his word that he never authorized the sale—the word, Mr. Farncombe, of a man who never told a lie in the whole course of his life."

"Anyhow, Scrivener's signature is genuine."

"No doubt; and probably he forged the signatures of my father's clerks, as well as that of his partner. William Markworthy is dead. But Jacob Coleman and my father will, between them, be able to prove the spuriousness of the document. I must return to them at once. My business in London is over for today. Had I found that Mr. Samuel Heathcote had no authority for his statement, I should have given him a call."

"Can I do any thing else for you?"

"Nothing—I think, nothing." After a pause, Albert added, a thought having suddenly occurred to him, "If I should need them, Mr. Farncombe, could you let me have fac-similes of the signatures on that power of attorney, which I should be at liberty to exhibit to experts?"

"Hm, hm! my young friend, I scarcely know what to say to that."

"They could be made by one of the engravers in the employment of the bank."

"Of course—no one else would be allowed to make them."

"The originals would never leave the custody of the bank."

"Well, I will think of your request, and answer you by letter. I have your address?"

"It is on my card."

"To be sure, on your card, which is in my pocket-book. I'll write to you. And now, good-bye. Give my regards to your father, and say to him that I wish him well through his troubles. I can't say more."

Having expressed his gratitude for Mr. Farncombe's goodness in cordial words, Albert left him, and in another minute was outside the Bank of England.

Though he had wasted no time since he knocked at Mr. Farncombe's door in Park Lane, it was already so late that he could not catch the morning train for Boringdonshire. It would, therefore, be impossible for him to leave town and get back to Earl's Court sooner than he had promised.

It was his ill luck that he could not get away from town so soon as he had intended. On arriving at the Euston Square terminus in time for the usual afternoon train to Boringdonshire, he learned that a disastrous collision of trains had taken place on the line, midway between Slingsby Junction and the Great Yard. The accident had blocked the road, and occasioned such damage to the way that the line could not be cleared and restored to the public service before the evening. Consequently Albert was compelled to wait for a slow train, which would not bring him to Owleybury before eleven o'clock, when his father would have passed a long evening in solitude, impatience, and anxiety.

The hours of waiting were tedious and af-

flicting; but at length, after taking an early and comfortless dinner at the Easton Hotel, Albert found himself once again in a first-class railway carriage, moving homeward.

During the tedious hours of waiting in town, and the long journey from town to Boringdonshire, the traveler found more than enough time for reflection. Working upon ascertained facts, and recollections of the way in which he had been pressed to make Blanche Heathcote an offer, he imagined with sufficient accuracy the exigencies which had driven Scrivener to perpetrate his greatest villainy, the means by which he had kept it from his partner's knowledge throughout three years, and the measures by which he had, till the date of Lottie's engagement, hoped to conceal his delinquency from the public.

Albert's thoughts took this course.

To encounter the urgent consequences of the failure of some of his desperate speculations, Scrivener had obtained possession of the trust-money. Had the breach of trust been the work of both trustees, it would have been a stupendous crime, but still an act of dishonesty only too common in a wicked world. It was chiefly remarkable because it had been done by the scoundrel without the knowledge of his co-trustee. The forger had probably executed his work without a confederate. He had himself ordered the application for the power of attorney; *that was certain*. He had doubtless intercepted the notice, sent by the bank to John Guerdon, informing him of the application. Hence the broker had obtained the form of the power without John Guerdon's cognizance. On receiving the form from his agent, Scrivener had probably filled it in with the names of himself and his partner and the attesting witnesses. On obtaining the check for the stock, the broker had either handed it to Scrivener, or paid it to the private account which his employer kept at some bank. It might even be that the broker, carrying out the instructions of the only trustee with whom he had been in personal negotiation, paid the money to Gimlett Scrivener's private account in the bank of which he was partner. In that case, the magnitude of the check would not have occasioned him much astonishment, or any curiosity among the clerks of the office, as even larger sums were continually passing through the junior partner's private account.

Albert, however, could not hope that he should find any traces of the transaction in the books at George Street. It appeared to him most probable that, on speaking to Mr. Dove, he should find that the broker had given into the forger's hand a check which the robber had himself presented at the Bank of England, or at the broker's banker. It was not likely that the cautious rogue had taken any needless step which might call attention to his fraud. Doubtless he had personally obtained payment of the check in large notes, so that no record or trace of his negotiation with Green, Dove & Swainson

should appear in any accounts that would, in the ordinary course of business, be inspected by his partner. It was easy to see how the bold forger had plundered the bank. It was no less easy to imagine half a dozen ways in which the forger might have manipulated the £63,428 18s. 2d., so as to avoid suspicion or curious observation in George Street.

Blanche Heathcote being his ward as well as the ward of his partner, Gimlett Scrivener, without seeming to intrude upon the proper province of John Guerdon, could have undertaken to manage the ordinary routine business of the trust, and to transmit her dividends and rent to Blanche Heathcote as they came to his hands. Acting thus in the capacity of her agent, he would have taken care to remit punctually her half-yearly income. As long as she received her expected payments, no suspicion of the transference of her stock would have occurred to her; and as long as her mind was at rest, nothing would have taken place to make John Guerdon nicely watchful of his co-trustee's proceedings respecting the trust. As these thoughts struck Albert, he deemed it likely that Scrivener had, in time prior to the appropriation of the money, arranged that the dividends of the Consols should be paid to his separate account in George Street, either by the Bank of England or the London agents of Guerdon & Scrivener. Anyhow, there were several obvious modes of proceeding by which Scrivener could have preserved his fraud from discovery, and, after the sale of the stock, have furnished Blanche Heathcote with her income from his private resources, while his unsuspecting partner continued to think that her dividends were still being paid by the Bank of England. Ten minutes' talk with his father would, Albert hoped, throw abundant light on the forger's later doings in the matter.

Like most rogues when they commit a flagrant breach of trust, Scrivener had probably intended to replace the Consols at an early date, by some means or other. On despairing of his ability to do so, he had hoped that the seasonable conjuncture of a marriage and a death might preserve his gravest crime altogether from detection, and keep his breach of trust from all the world save Albert. He had done his utmost to bring about a marriage between Albert and Blanche, and he had calculated on the possibility of his partner's opportune death within a few weeks of the wedding. This conjuncture of events would afford him a chance of security. In anticipation of the lady's marriage, a settlement of the Earl's Court estate might be made on her, in consideration of the large personal property which she would bring her husband. If she stood out for a larger settlement, her own farm could be added to the settlement of the real estate. Such a settlement would give the schemer a few months' grace. The young couple might be induced to make a long wedding tour in the south of Europe; in which case Albert would not care to look after his re-

cent acquisition in the Consols until he had returned from his bridal trip. During that trip, John Guerdon, whose health had been failing fast for some time, might have the civility to die. Means even might be formed to accelerate his decay, so that he should not greet the bride on her return. In that case, Gimlett Scrivener saw how he might escape from a desperate position. He would pretend to make a clean breast of it to Albert, telling him how his wife's Consols had been sold and appropriated by her trustees. In the absence of the only person who could expose the forgery, Albert would not suspect the real nature of the transaction, but believe that his father had been a party to the breach of trust. Never imagining that the transference of the stock had been effected by a forgery of the dead man's signature, Albert would not be likely to inform the world of the breach of trust, since to do so would be to acknowledge that his marriage had not enriched him—and yet more, to declare himself the victim and son of a preposterous rogue. The young man would keep the secret of the scandalous transaction, out of regard for his wife's feelings, his dead father's memory, and his own interests. Of course it would be repugnant to Mr. Scrivener's kindness and generosity to inspire Albert with contempt for and abhorrence of his father; but self-preservation would require the forger to be alike pitiless to the dead father and the living son. As for his own future, knowing that no legal penalty attached to the only offense of which he would be supposed guilty, Mr. Scrivener was not uneasy if only Albert would marry Blanche, and John Guerdon die during their honeymoon. Albert could not expose the fraudulent action of the living trustee without blackening the memory of the dead one, and announcing himself the son of a rascal. He could not publish the affair without doing the George Street bank an irreparable injury. Perhaps he would quarrel with the surviving trustee in a way that would terminate their intercourse. In that case, Mr. Scrivener was ready to retire from Hammerhampton and the Great Yard, on receiving a fair consideration for his share in the George Street business.

So long as Mr. Scrivener could hope for a marriage between Albert and Blanche, followed by John Guerdon's timely death, he did not despair of being able to hold his own, and more, in the Great Yard. But the announcement of the young man's engagement to Lottie convinced the man of clever wits and hopeless fortunes that his game in the Great Yard could not be prolonged for more than another year. To save himself from premature exposure, and to gain every chance of a favorable retreat from an untenable position, he resisted successfully Mr. Guerdon's desire to take Albert at once into the George Street business.

Though he did not perceive all the points and hopes of Scrivener's perilous game so fully and exactly as readers of the last few pages can not fail to do, Albert would have been want-

ing in his ordinary discernment, had he, on his homeward journey, failed to detect the considerations and motives which had caused Mr. Scrivener to desire a marriage between his plundered ward and his co-trustee's son. Remembering how the project for that marriage had originated with the forger, the young man saw how its accomplishment would have restrained him from proclaiming the shameful breach of trust. He saw also that he should have certainly regarded his father as a participator in the fraud, had the old man died prematurely in ignorance of his partner's villainy.

It was well for Albert that his mind busied itself with scrutinizing the circumstances under which the forger had accomplished his crime, and had guarded it three years from discovery. The employment which thus occupied his brain withdrew his mind from more afflicting subjects for meditation. So long as he thought of his father and Scrivener, and imagined possible discoveries by which the old man might demonstrate his good faith toward Blanche Heathcote, he was spared the anguish of thinking about Lottie, and the probability that his engagement to her would be broken. But again and again, during his journey by the slow train, the diversion of his thoughts was abruptly checked by sharp recollections of Arleigh Manor, and of the dangers which menaced his intercourse with the daughter of the house.

On reaching Owleybury at last, he was not surprised to find Nesling and the dog-cart in attendance, though he had thought it possible that, in the absence of one of the Earl's Court carriages, he would have to engage a fly for the remainder of his journey.

"How's your master, Nesling!" Albert inquired, when he had lit a cigar and mounted the cart.

"Well, sir, he has been worrying a deal about you. He was looking for you to be back again by dinner. And when, instead of you, sir, he only got the news of the smash to the midday up train, he was put out dreadful."

"Has he had any callers to-day?"

"Lots of visitors, sir. Mr. Greaves, and Mr. Coleman, and another gentleman were with him in the morning for two or three hours. And in the afternoon, several gentlemen—more than twenty of them, as I hear—came over to the Court from Owleybury and elsewhere. There has been coming and going at the Court all day. But master dined without company, and I suppose he is alone now."

CHAPTER VII.

STAY OF ARREST.

THOUGH the brown mare threw out her legs in a style worthy of the fastest trotter of the neighborhood, Albert did not reach his father's door before midnight. The morning's collision had occasioned slowness of movement all down

the line. It had made guards timid, drivers cautious, and station-masters tardy. The slow train, on arriving at Owleybury, was more than half an hour late.

On entering the house, Albert encountered his father in the hall, and saw at a glance that the old man was grievously distressed by the agitations of the day. Indeed, John Guerdon had passed a troublous time in his son's absence. His long interview with his solicitor, chief clerk, and the London accountant had bothered and worried him. It had painfully humiliated the broken banker to exhibit the proofs of his incompetence to the lawyer whom he had hitherto been wont to patronize pompously, and to the arithmetician whom he had never seen before. Mr. Jacob Coleman's insolence had infuriated the fallen master almost beyond endurance. The subsequent callers—capitalists of the Great Yard, or managers of Guerdon & Scrivener's branch banks—had aggravated the wretched bankrupt yet further. Each visitor had given him a prick or stab, and some of the wounds had been inflicted out of sheer cruelty. Under any circumstances Albert's non-appearance at the dinner hour would have caused the veteran keen disappointment; but the annoyance, following on a series of provocations, and attended with the alarming intelligence of the frightful accident on the line, threw him into a panic, lest some other mortal mishap should have prevented his boy's return.

At his lonely dinner he ate greedily, and had recourse to his usual means for driving away care; and, while drinking his port-wine copiously, but without enjoyment, he had spent the evening imagining half a score ways by which Albert might have come to harm. The boy had been killed in a railway accident; he had been run over in a London thoroughfare and taken to a hospital; he had been murdered by Samuel Heathcote in a fit of fury. It was just half-past ten, when an even more horrible imagination seized the father's fevered brain. Albert had been to the bank, discovered that the stock had been sold, and, driven to despair by what he deemed to be the proofs of his father's iniquity, had rushed off and committed suicide. Hitherto it had not occurred to John Guerdon how the Consols could have been sold without his knowledge. But he had no sooner entertained the possibility that Sam Heathcote had written on sufficient authority than the terror-distraught bankrupt saw how, by a forgery, Scrivener might have sold the funds, and appropriated the more than sixty thousand pounds. From that moment the wretched old man lost all self-control, and had spent his time in pacing about the house, and scolding every one whom he encountered. Sending Nesling, with the mare and dog-cart, off to meet the late train, he had scandalized and slightly frightened the groom by screaming at him,

"And, you dog, if you don't bring your young master back with you, I'll shoot you—by heavens, I'll shoot you!"

As soon as he saw his son once more, the old man seized his hand with a spasmodic clutch, and pulled him toward the dining-room, exclaiming,

"Here, here, be quick! I have been wanting you for hours. How came you to miss your train? Now be quick—tell me every thing at once."

Closing the door of the dining-room, so that their words might not be overheard, Albert responded slowly,

"Well, sir, I have so much to tell you that I can't say it all at once. You must compose yourself, sir, and prepare yourself for a long conversation. Here, father, let us sit down; for I am tired out, and you look fatigued."

Under the influence of his boy's soothing, though authoritative, voice and manner, John Guerdon became less excited, and sank backward obediently into his easy-chair.

To make time, in which the sufferer should recover something of his ordinary quietude, and show himself capable of enduring the hideous disclosures which must be made to him that night, Albert was about to speak at length of the earliest and unimportant part of the morning's adventures.

"Well, sir, on reaching London I went to your old hotel in Bond Street, and when I had had a bath, and made my toilet, and taken a good breakfast, I called on Mr. Farncombe in Park Lane, who—"

"Never mind Farncombe," interposed the father, sharply. "Are the Consols all right? And have you seen Sam Heathcote, and given him a—good thrashing?"

"Well, sir, I can't say," Albert returned, with an effort to seem cool, and with a dismal attempt at a smile, "that I have thrashed him as soundly as he deserves."

"Have you seen him?"

"No, sir, I have not."

"Then the money is *not* safe!" cried the old man, rising quickly from his chair, and extending his hands, as he proceeded to stagger across the hearth-rug to Albert, who as quickly rose and put forward his hands. "Alb, Alb, don't say that the villain has forged my signature, and got hold of Blanche Heathcote's money! Don't say it! Dear Alb, my boy, my only boy, do say the stock is safe? Speak—speak—the only words that can save me."

It was a pitiable spectacle—the broken father imploring with words and prayerful hands that his loving son would speak the only words which the young man might not, dared not, could not utter.

Since passionately pathetic words could not extort the assurance, the old man had recourse to speechless eloquence, and gave his boy an agonizing look of supplication—a look which Albert can remember at this day, and to which he could give no gentler reply than murderous silence.

That cruel silence gave John Guerdon the blow which Albert had for forty-eight hours

feared would fall upon the old man from some hostile force.

Like a soldier struck mortally by a bullet in the field of action, John Guerdon tottered, reeled, and fell upon the ground, speechless and unconscious.

He was not dead, for he breathed heavily, with the ominous, stertorous loudness of which Albert had often read, though he had never before heard the sound.

In a trice Albert caught up two cushions from the adjacent sofa, and put them under his father's head; and then, kneeling on the floor by the prostrate figure, he pressed its unresisting right hand to his lips, and implored the dull visage to speak.

"Father, father," the son prayed, "do speak to me! There is so much that you *must* say; do speak! Oh! father, do speak to me!"

But the prayer was as vain as the stricken man's last entreaty.

With retaliating dumbness, John Guerdon was in his turn silent. No sound but that of the struggling, stertorous respirations came from his lips, which were disfigured with clammy whiteness.

Rising quickly to his feet, Albert summoned the servants by ringing the bell violently, and calling to them in his loudest tones.

"Tell Nesling," he cried to the first of them who made his appearance, "to go off to Owlebury for Dr. Margetson. Order him to ride at the gallop. Your master is in a fit. And then all of you come and assist me to carry him to his bed."

An hour later, when the doctor arrived from the cathedral town, John Guerdon was lying on the outside of his bed, to which Albert, with the aid of six servants, had with difficulty conveyed him.

One of those scientific and highly educated physicians, who were less common in our provincial towns five-and-twenty years since than they are at the present date, Dr. Margetson had the style, and culture, and nice discernment which distinguish representative members of the medical faculty.

On his way to his patient's side, he touched Albert's hand courteously, and then for several minutes gave his undivided attention to the sick man.

Having made his observations, told the housekeeper how to support the patient's head with pillows, and ordered the other servants to leave the room, Dr. Margetson, turning to Albert, said kindly, "Come with me to another room. I will return to your father when we have had a few words."

Having conducted the physician to a room on the same floor—the room which had been furnished and decorated for Lottie's boudoir—Albert began the brief conversation which he and the doctor, without sitting down, held by the light of a single taper.

"What is it?"

"Apoplexy—there is no doubt of that."

"Will he lie in that state long?"

"Not very long—but probably some hours."

"When will he recover his consciousness?"

"My dear sir," responded the doctor, seriously and very gently, putting a light hand on one of Albert's shoulders, "he will never recover his consciousness in this world. So far as the intellect goes, he is dead to you already. The body will follow the mind—perhaps to-night; perhaps after twenty-four, or even forty-eight, hours' suffering. It may undergo convulsions, more distressing to beholders than to him, before it yields its last breath. The best thing, then, we may hope for that mindless body is that it may expire in the course of a few hours, without any muscular trouble that it would afflict you to witness."

"Can nothing be done?"

"Nothing which would benefit him. Old-fashioned and ill-informed doctors would bleed him, put blisters to his temples, and cauteries to sensitive parts of the body. By such means they would appear to be doing something, though, in fact, they would only be adding slightly to the discomfort which he endures, without being conscious of it. If I perpetrated any such charlatanries, they would only trouble him a little, and pain you very much. Are you satisfied?"

"I want him to speak," Albert answered, bitterly and piteously, for a moment exhibiting feminine weakness.

"Ah! miracles are not wrought nowadays."

In his anguish making a confidant of the man whom he knew but slightly, Albert said, tremulously,

"He was struck dumb, Dr. Margetson, at the very moment when he would have told me how to disprove a slander which no one else can answer, and which, if it is unanswered, will render him hateful to all the world. His partner has perpetrated a forgery that will cover my innocent father with infamy. If he die without speaking, the world will call him cheat, rogue, thief, villain. Oh! he must speak again to me, Dr. Margetson! The world may not be so unjust to him!"

"A few hours more," replied the physician, tenderly and firmly, "he will be where this world's injustice will not trouble him, and where justice is qualified by nothing but mercy. Let the world babble of him falsely—God will take care of him."

"Yes, yes, it is God's will," Albert observed, with simplicity. "I was a fool to forget that."

The time of his weakness had passed, and Albert assumed the stoicism which is the proper mourning-robe for a brave man in trouble.

Having returned to John Guerdon's side, and, after watching him for three minutes, ordered that every opportunity should be taken to put brandy between his teeth, Dr. Margetson took his leave of Albert, promising to call on him again in the morning.

Throughout the night John Guerdon continued to breathe heavily, under his son's incessant-

ly watchful eyes. He did not appear to grow weaker, but no sign of returning consciousness caused Albert to question Dr. Margetson's judgment of the case. The mind had perished. It mattered little whether the body yielded its last breath in a few minutes or after another brief day.

When the dawn had broadened into full daylight, and another summer's morning had brightened hill and vale, and was inspiring the wild birds to sing their blithest songs, Albert left his father's room for a few minutes, and sent off by a messenger to Arleigh Manor this brief note for Lottie's papa :

"DEAR SIR JAMES,—I am back from London. My dear father is dying in unconsciousness of an apoplectic seizure, that struck him down a few hours since, shortly after midnight. Dr. Margetson says that there is no hope of a return of the lost intelligence, even for a single moment. I have no good news to tell you about George Street. What bad news I could tell you, the papers will declare in a few hours. Tell Lottie that she may not hope to see me till after my dear father's funeral. My love to her, and also to dear Lady Darling. Your affectionate
ALBERT."

In obedience to orders, the messenger, who took this note to Arleigh, waited at the manor-house for a reply. Shortly before ten o'clock, when John Guerdon's condition had in no outward respect altered since his seizure, Albert received this answer from Arleigh :

"MY DEAR SIR,—Accept my expressions of sincerest sympathy for your troubles. May God give you strength to bear them! I pity you from my heart. Don't afflict yourself by putting on paper the details of any calamitous disclosures. I shall learn them soon enough from the press. Last night's *Globe* prepared me for more ill news about George Street. With warmest regards, I remain, ever sincerely yours,
"JAMES DARLING."

As he read this note hastily, in the presence of his father's expiring body, it did not escape Albert that he was no longer "My dear Albert," but "My dear Sir," to the judge of the Boringdonshire County Court.

Two hours more, and still no change in the dying man's state. The hall clock was striking twelve, when the front-door bell of the mansion was rung loudly.

"See, James," Albert observed to the butler, who was just leaving his master's bedroom, "that no caller is admitted, with the exception of Dr. Margetson. All visitors but the doctor must be told that your master is dying. Tell them the time of his seizure, and that he will probably expire in the course of the day."

After the lapse of five minutes, the butler re-entered the room with a look of displeasure on his countenance, and an envelope in his hand.

"If you please, sir," the man said, "there are two persons—gentlemen, they may be, for all I know, in the library—who insisted on coming into the house, although I told them of Mr. Guerdon's state. They asked for master, sir; and when I told them why he could not see them, they answered, 'Ay, but all the same for that, we must see him!' I told them again what my orders were. But they pushed past me into the house, and then one of them said, 'Now lead us up to your master's room?' I told them I would not, as you were there with master. 'Then,' said the same one, taking out a card and putting it in this envelope, 'take my card up to Mr. Guerdon's son, and show us into a room of some sort, or we can wait here. Young Mr. Guerdon will see us!'"

Taking the envelope and the servant's explanation at the same time, Albert opened the former and glanced at the card, which contained the printed words: "Mr. Manson, Sergeant of Detectives, Municipal Constabulary, London." It was no official card, but the placard by which Mr. Manson announced his quality and degree, in the manner most agreeable to himself, to the members of his own social circle.

Quitting his father's bedside without a word, Albert hastened to the library, and confronted the two policemen in plain clothes. They were intelligent men, and the spokesman of the two had something of the voice and bearing of a gentleman.

Addressing the superior of the two unwelcome visitors, Albert said,

"You are, I suppose, Mr. Manson?"

"I am, sir—of the London detective police, on duty."

"As Mr. Guerdon's son, may I ask you your business?"

"I am here, sir, with a warrant for the arrest of your father, whom you must permit me to see at once, in order that I may make him my prisoner."

"But he is dying—can not live for many hours."

"So the servant told me, sir; but all the same, duty requires me to make the arrest. If he is not in a state to be removed, why, he must lie here for the present. But I must make him my prisoner."

"May I ask you what is the charge on which your warrant authorizes you to arrest him?"

"Forgery, sir, that is the charge," replied Mr. Manson, lowering his voice to a hoarse whisper.

"On whom! What are the particulars?"

"Well, sir, I am not bound to tell you them. It is not always that I know the particulars of the case on which I have to make an arrest."

"Of course, sir," Albert returned, politely, and with much feeling, "you are under no obligation to communicate to me any part of your instructions. But I rely on your courtesy to be communicative within the limits of your duty. My dear father, as you will see in a few minutes, is past telling me any thing. So I am com-

pelled to ask you for the information which his lips can no longer afford me. You, sir, were a son once. Perhaps you have a father still. In that case, my prayer is that you may never suffer as I do now."

Priding himself on being a gentleman, although he was a policeman, the detective seized the opportunity for displaying his quality to a gentleman in trouble, who addressed him so fairly—not to say deferentially. Moreover, Mr. Manson was a better fellow at heart than most presuming persons; and his good feelings were roused by Albert's wretchedness and courteous dignity of bearing.

Mr. Manson became communicative almost to loquaciousness.

The case was just this: Two months since Messrs. Guerdon & Scrivener, bankers of Hammerhampton, had borrowed the small sum of £15,000 of Messrs. Pittock & Murphy, bill-discounters, King William Street, City of London, and, together with other securities for the payment of the sum, had deposited with Messrs. Pittock & Murphy a bill for two thousand four hundred odd pounds, accepted by Mr. Josias Radley, of the Vulcan Iron Works, Blast-rock. Mr. Guerdon had himself negotiated the business with Messrs. Pittock & Murphy; and, on indorsing the bill, he had requested that Messrs. Pittock & Murphy would not let it go out of their hands until it should have fallen due—as Mr. Guerdon did not like the notion that paper bearing his indorsement should be floating about the city and country. Messrs. Pittock & Murphy having had frequent dealings with the Hammerhampton bankers, promised to observe so reasonable and common a request. But as soon as the bankers had failed, Messrs. Pittock & Murphy, becoming alarmed, had put themselves in communication with Mr. Josias Radley, of the Vulcan Iron Works, Blast-rock, who had immediately repudiated the signature of acceptance as a forgery.

So far as penal consequences were concerned, forgery was a far graver offense than the breach of trust which John Guerdon would have committed had he been Scrivener's coadjutor in the misappropriation of Blanche Heathcote's fortune. In the eye of the law it was a far more heinous misdeed. Leaving the breaker of trust to the punishment of social scorn, the law awarded to the forger a convict's doom and felon's stigma. And ordinary men, whose notions of right and wrong, of honor and dishonor, were strictly conventional, accepted the legal distinction as a measure of the respective enormity of the two wrongs. There are degrees of extreme turpitude; and popular sentiment naturally expressed a profounder horror for the offense which the law corrected with heavy penalties than for the offense which it left to the tribunal of social opinion. Albert was no ordinary man. His conceptions of right and wrong were not conventional. To him the loss of honor was not less ignominious than the endurance of legal infamy. But even he, with

his deep and vivid sense of the traitor's perfidy, was horrified at learning that his father, in his powerlessness to defend himself, would be deemed a forger, as well as a fraudulent trustee. The sweat of mental agony rolled down his forehead as he saw this heavy addition made to the burden of disgrace put upon his father's fame. Not that he, for an instant, deemed his father capable of indorsing an acceptance which he knew to be fictitious. Nothing could shake his confidence in the old man's commercial honesty. The spurious acceptance had been fabricated by the same villain who forged his partner's signature on the power of attorney. In good faith, and with perfect confidence in the genuineness of the paper placed in his hands by his treacherous partner, John Guerdon had indorsed the spurious bill, and given it as valid security for borrowed money. Even yet, the dying man's honor should be purged of the stains set upon it by another's villainies. He might perish in disgrace, but his memory should be made white as virtue. Thus Albert thought and resolved.

In the mean time, while the dishonored man was drawing his last breath in the chamber above, the son stood face to face with the policeman.

"And it is necessary that you should see him at once, although you have my assurance that he is unconscious and sinking?" Albert inquired, in a tone which betrayed his wish to preserve his father's person from the indignity of an arrest.

"I must do my duty," Mr. Manson replied, civilly but firmly, bowing to the wretched questioner.

"Of course, you must do your duty; but is it needful that you should execute your warrant immediately? Can not you wait an hour, or even a few minutes?"

"No, sir; I must do my work at once. And, Lord bless you, sir, if the gentleman is so far gone as you say, I sha'n't disturb him."

"Disturb him? Oh no, you won't trouble him."

"It is only a form, sir. The servant can be sent out of the room, and then I shall only put my hand on the gentleman's shoulder, and say the words, 'John Guerdon, I arrest you on a charge of forgery. You are my prisoner'—that's all I shall do. It won't hurt him."

Albert shuddered at this brief and dramatic description of "all" that the policeman would do.

"Then, gentlemen, I will conduct you to my father's bedside," he said, calmly.

Turning to his subordinate, Mr. Manson said, "Hurrell, you may wait here. I will go with this gentleman. It will be *pleasanter* to young Mr. Guerdon that only one of us should go into the room."

Having thus shown his desire to make things as *pleasant* as possible, Mr. Manson followed Albert up stairs, and in another minute crossed the threshold of John Guerdon's bedroom.

Glancing at the prostrate figure on the bed, and then addressing the woman who was leaning over it, Albert said,

"Mrs. Johnson, have the goodness to leave the room for a minute. This gentleman and I wish to be alone with my father. Why! Mrs. Johnson, he is very quiet! He does not breathe!"

Raising her eyes from the face which she had been watching intently, and turning them to her young master, Mrs. Johnson said, seriously,

"Sir, your father is no longer here. He died at the very moment when you entered the room. His soul met you at the door."

Turning sharply round on the unwelcome visitor by his side, Albert bowed slightly and said, with cold, biting irony,

"Sir, your prisoner has escaped you. You must follow him to another country."

"What! gone just a minute too soon?"

"Nay, sir; gone not a moment too late. My father is beyond your reach, Mr. Manson. If you follow him to the land to which he has escaped, your warrant will be powerless there."

Mr. Manson was annoyed. He felt like a sportsman who has just missed his bird; like a singer whose finest notes have been taken from him by a sudden hoarseness in the middle of a song; like an orator who at the last moment has lost the occasion for a telling speech; like a courtier checked in the performance of a graceful gesture by a sharp jerk of rheumatism. He was on the point of showing young Mr. Guerdon with what ease, and delicacy, and regard for the finer sensibilities a gentleman-like policeman could deprive a dying gentleman of his liberty, when, lo, the almost arrested man had escaped under the very nose of his pursuer, and started in freedom on the longest and last of all journeys.

Yes, John Guerdon—bankrupt, as he was, in truth; scoundrel and forger, as he would be in the world's esteem—had passed beyond the limits of all human jurisdiction. In no court of our sovereign lady the Queen would he be arraigned on a charge of felony. No jury of twelve gentlemen in a box would ever be authorized to examine the evidence of his guilt, and to decide whether he had forged the signature of Josias Radley, of the Vulcan Iron Works, Blastrock. The only judge before whom he would appear was the Judge to whom all men must sooner or later plead "guilty." The only tribunal that could now take cognizance of his crimes was the tribunal before which the best of us and the worst of us will, ere very long, kneel side by side, meekly confessing sins and asking pardon for trespasses.

Now that the everlasting spirit had left it, Death and human sentiment gave to the soulless tenement a sacredness to which Mr. Manson was constrained to render homage. He had entered the room to seize John Guerdon's body. The body lay there, silent, and incapable of resistance. But the constable dared not lay a finger on it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

WITH promptness Albert took the requisite steps for his father's funeral. And in taking them he received at least one painful proof of the suspicion with which he was regarded by the humbler people of the Great Yard. On receiving orders for a strictly private interment, the undertaker, who had been summoned from Hammerhampton to Earl's Court, inquired significantly to whom he was to look for the payment of his bill. Whereupon, concealing his annoyance at the not unreasonable inquiry, Albert dispelled the tradesman's doubts, and purchased his obsequious smiles by giving him a Bank of England note.

In acknowledgment of a letter which announced to him the banker's death, Sir James Darling wrote to the dishonored son a few civil but studiously cautious words of condolence. Mr. Fairbank, the rector of Ewebridge, the parish in which Earl's Court stood, replied more sympathetically to the note that informed him of Albert's wish to place his father's coffin in the vault of Ewebridge church, which had long guarded the body of the dead man's wife. But though the rector expressed himself with courtesy and gentleman-like kindness, his letter was characterized by a constraint and stiffness which showed that the writer felt how recent events had affected the quality and status of John Guerdon's son.

Some of the sharpest anguish which Albert experienced in the interval between his father's death and interment came to him from the perusal of the articles that the London and Boringdonshire press discharged over the unburied body of the bankrupt, scoundrel, forger. Of course the journalists took the worst view of John Guerdon's failure and alleged crimes. It would have been strange had they taken any other in the face of the damning evidence. They can not be censured severely for speaking of the disastrously inopportune death as a "convenient and suspicious event." They were only doing their duty to the public when, in spite of Dr. Margetson's conclusive evidence as to the cause of death, they insinuated that the forger had added suicide to his other crimes. His extinction, at the very moment when Justice was on the point of laying her hand upon him, being highly melodramatic, it was only natural that smart writers should make the most of the theatrical position in their graphic leaders. On the other hand, the reasonableness and apparent justice of their comments on the "Tragic End of the Hammerhampton Banker" did not render them less afflicting to "the forger's" only child.

Throughout this period of distress Albert never heard from Lottie. He did not resent her silence, or deem it expressive of unkindness; though he construed it as a proof that she had been told to regard their engagement as a wretched affair of the past. Imagining

vividly the tortures which were rending her heart, and perhaps shattering her intellect, Albert's one feeling for the girl who might not be his wife was a state of intense and harrowing commiseration. His regret for his father's death, his sense of his own unutterable desolation, his incessantly galling recollections of the infamies put upon him, were trivial pains in comparison with the mental agonies which resulted from his pity for Lottie, and from his maddening recognition of his inability to do any thing for her comfort. The thought of the misery which he had been the innocent means of bringing upon her, again and again goaded him into a fury of remorseful despair, bordering on the frenzy of suicides.

Nor did Albert exaggerate the sufferings of the miserable girl. For three days she vaguely apprehended her doom. She felt the cold chill of the coming storm, and drooped in dumb terror under the blackness of the impending clouds before they burst forth in the thunder and deluge which swept Albert from her. It was not till the evening after John Guerdon's death that Sir James Darling took Lottie to his library, and, in her mother's absence, informed her, by brief but not needlessly unkind words, that, however much she might continue to love him, she might not marry the son of a cheat and forger. It would be hard for Albert, cruel for her, grievous to all who cared for her, but the course of honor was the only one open to a good and dutiful girl. In justice to the little judge, it must be recorded that he nearly broke down in the performance of his barbarous task; but he accomplished it, with all the greater difficulty, and keener compunction at his own cruelty, because Lottie answered never a word until he had set forth all the reasons why she must dismiss Albert, and forget him.

"Forget him!" the girl ejaculated, gasping for breath in her giddiness and faintness, as she stood by the side of the library-table, opposite to her father, who was also on his feet—"forget him! It is impossible! I can't forget him—but I can die! Oh! yes, dear father, I can die!"

Though he dared not even glance at the whiteness of her woeful cheeks or the anguish of her writhing lips, Sir James Darling felt that she was in peril of falling to the ground.

In five seconds he had caught her in his arms, and extended her on a sofa, where she lay trembling and in silence for several minutes. She did not lose her consciousness. The very intensity of her pain denied her the natural relief of extreme agony.

Rising from the sofa, as soon as she felt that her limbs would bear her, she hastened toward the door. Seeing that she was bent on leaving him thus abruptly, without a word of forgiveness to her torturer, Sir James Darling put forth his arms, with the show of a wish to detain her. The movement fired the few rebellious elements of the docile girl's nature, and,

turning sharply round upon him, with flashing eyes and such anger as had never before flamed in her face, she caused him to fall away from her.

"Father, don't dare to touch me. You have been cruel enough—barbarous enough," she exclaimed. "If you dare to follow me, I will never forgive you. If you dare to tell my mother how ill you have made me, I will never forgive you. If you—"

But there was no need for Lottie to say more. In sheer astonishment and dismay at this outburst of rage from a girl notable for sweetness of temper, her father had retreated several yards from her.

Seizing her opportunity, Lottie slipped from the room, and in another minute was at the door of her private apartment.

Lottie could not remember on the following day, and she never learned exactly what took place during the remainder of that evening in her sleeping-room. The next day, when she had struggled to consciousness through a series of doleful dreams, she could recall how she had thrown herself on her bed, thinking and hoping that she would die at once. She fancied that her mother had visited her, and cried over her; and she had misty recollections of a strange gentleman, who had perplexed her with questions which she could not answer, for the sufficient reason that she could not understand a word of them, and only knew that they were questions from the look of his face. The incident, of which she had the clearest remembrance, was that this gentlemanly stranger had compelled her to drink something out of a wine-glass. Readers may take it for granted that the gentleman was Dr. Margetson, who had been summoned from Owlebury to see the girl, when her wild talk and passionate exclamations had alarmed her parents very greatly.

Lottie was not allowed to leave her bed all that next day after John Guerdon's death. It would have been ill for her had she rebelled against her two nurses—her mother and her mother's maid—and insisted on rising; for, truth to tell, she was very ill. Mental agony had weakened her surprisingly in the course of a few hours; and for more than forty-eight hours her perilous condition exhibited no signs of improvement. Passing quickly from fits of silent weeping to fits of angry speaking, she afflicted Mary Darling alike by the vehemence of her grief and the extravagance of her indignation.

"What wrong has *he* done?" she exclaimed, in one of her talkative moods. "If *he* is bad, tell me so. But you know he is good. Oh, mother, mother, can you say any evil of Albert, except that he is miserable, and poor, and loaded with obloquy for the sins of others? The crimes were done by others; and all the punishment is his. Mamma, do you hear me? I am talking to you. Can you tell me of a single evil thing that Albert has done? Can you? Do tell me if you can."

To which heart-rending inquiries Mary Darling was compelled to reply by bearing testimony to Albert's goodness.

"I was not the only one to love him," the sick girl continued. "Mother, you loved him?"

"Lottie, dear Lottie, I love him still."

"You wished him to love me before he had ever seen me! and you hoped that I might love him. When I was a mere school-child, without a thought of love such as I bear him, you encouraged me to think about him, and speak to him frankly, and treat him like a familiar cousin. You know you did, mamma. If you had not wished me to love him, ay, and if you had not sought his love for me, you would not have let us shoot at the butts, happy morning after happy morning. And now that my heart has grown into his heart, you are tearing us apart. God has joined us, and wicked people are pulling us asunder. I won't forget him—I can't. He is my Albert—my own, own Albert—more mine than ever, now that I alone have the courage to love him. Oh, dear mamma, would you have me desert him, whom I took for better or for worse, when you are compelled to own that he is as good, and true, and noble as he was when you taught me to love him?"

"If you were his wife, Lottie," Lady Darling answered, "I would encourage you to cleave to him, if he were even a worse man than his father. But you only promised conditionally to be his wife."

"There were no conditions," Lottie exclaimed, fiercely, "to the free gift of my whole heart that I made him! He gave himself to me, I gave myself to him, and from that moment I became his wedded wife—as much his wife as if our marriage had been celebrated. And now you say, 'But he is poor, he is sick, he is slandered, and therefore desert him, though he is good thoroughly.' Oh, mother, is that the cold way in which you loved my father, and he you? I can believe it of him; but you have always seemed to love me wholly."

"Child," the mother urged, beseechingly, "do not speak so to me. Albert's grief troubles me almost as much as your sorrow does. You know I love you. All that I have ever said to you of my affection for him was uttered truly; and he has done nothing to make him less dear to me. He is my Albert still."

"Then why urge me to be false and barbarous to him? *Your* Albert! He is not yours! He is *mine*—my own! Oh, Albert, Albert, they shall not separate us! Mother, why do you try to torture me into the wickedness of perfidy?"

"Why?" the mother answered, gently and very earnestly. "Lottie, I am the mother of other children besides you. I love you more than any of them—more than all of them. You were my last babe, you are the child who never gave me cross words or unkind look, who have strengthened me in my weakness, and gladdened me in my sorrow. You have been so very tender and good to me. But though

you are my dearest child, I must think of my other children. For their sakes, I implore you to be brave, and unselfish, and self-sacrificing. Don't cause them to blush and turn faint with shame at the mention of their sister who married the forger's son."

"It is not myself only that you ask me to sacrifice," the girl returned. "You ask me to sacrifice Albert. You want me to strike him, now he is forlorn, and desolate, and shame-burdened. Oh, mother, take your barbarous love from me!" she cried, madly. "It is worse than any hate! It covers me with fire, and is eating away my heart. Are there no limits to a loving mother's cruelty?"

At which bitter, burning words, Mary Darling, who had borne the girl's previous reproaches with equal fortitude and meekness, broke down. Her strength yielding to the successive blows given her by an adversary, too madly wretched to be aware of the enormity of her unfilial behavior, the mother cried, "Oh, Lottie, Lottie, that I should have lived to hear such words from you! Is my love, indeed, so hateful and cursed?" And, having thus spoken, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

The spectacle of her mother's violent grief did Lottie good. It startled her out of her selfish sorrow, and for a few moments put Albert out of her mind. It scared her with a sudden revelation of her own cruelty to her mother. For a brief while she saw nothing but her own undaughterful wickedness, and the woe which it had occasioned.

The strong and fervid affection for her gentler parent, which had been the mightiest force of her nature until it had been surpassed by her love of Albert, asserted itself, and in another moment the poor girl, springing from her recumbent posture, threw her arms round her mother's neck, and covered her wan cheeks with kisses and tears.

"Pardon me," she implored—"oh, mother, pardon me! Indeed I am not so bad a girl as my wild words make you think me!—indeed, indeed I love you, though grief is maddening my brain, and filling my heart with wickedness. Oh, say you do not love me less for my naughtiness! Oh, that I should have lived to be a bad daughter to you!"

The kisses and tears, without the words, would have won Mary Darling's complete forgiveness. Her grief had no resentment against its cause. Lottie's words did too much; they caused her mother to accuse herself of impatience and unkind vehemence to the child, whose cruel speeches only showed that their utterer was beside herself with grief.

"My pet," the mother answered, returning the tears and caresses, "you were not naughty, but only wildly wretched; and it is even harder for me to see you wretched than to think you unkind."

Having received this assurance, Lottie fell back again on her pillows, faintly protesting,

"But I am wicked—very wicked! Oh, dear God, help me to be good, till my heart breaks, and I die!"

There were other scenes, scarcely less violent and distressing, between Lady Darling and her child. But, in the course of five or six days, Lottie grew calmer and more reasonable. She could listen with silent attention while her mother showed her tenderly and cogently why her marriage with Albert would be very hurtful to her sister and brothers, as well as unspeakably painful to her father. She even held some conversations on the subject with her father, who, though his words were not devoid of a tone of unyielding hardness, performed his repulsive task with considerable discretion and some delicacy. With equal prudence and justice, he spoke of Albert with unqualified approval and compassion, while entreating Lottie, out of sisterly love for her brothers, to refrain from a marriage which would cover them with discredit in the opinion of their comrades in the army. So Lottie was brought by degrees to see that, if love and duty on the one hand required her to be true to Albert, love and duty on the other hand enjoined her to refrain from marrying him. Pulled in opposite directions by two mighty forces—devotion to Albert, and unselfish affection for her family—she was grievously perplexed. Remembering how Miss Constantine had told her that a good girl should be especially heedful to avoid selfishness in her love affairs, and should be ready to sacrifice much of her own wishes for the happiness of her nearest kindred, Lottie came to the conclusion that no mere selfish regard for her own felicity should make her carry out her engagement to Albert in opposition to the entreaties of her parents. But she had obligations to him, as well as to them. For them she could sacrifice herself, even though by doing so she would earn life-long wretchedness. But she could not sacrifice *him*—she could not be faithless and cruel to Albert.

And so she passed an entire week in anguish, and tears, and secret lamentations, and much prayer to God for help, until Albert had seen his father's coffin placed in the vault of Ewebridge church.

The bankrupt's funeral was simple and unostentatious. Decent and reverential, it was devoid of the display which would have ill-become the obsequies of a man who had died in debt and shame. No old friends were invited to feign respect for him whom they had ceased to esteem. The only followers of the hearse were Albert and the Earl's Court servants, and they went on foot to the picturesque church, which stands, out of sight of human dwellings, at the meeting of three ways, where the rippling Purl, after winding round two sides of the church-yard, flows under a rustic bridge, on its way to the Luce.

But though none of the banker's many acquaintances had been summoned to his interment, curiosity brought a considerable assembly

of gazers to the secluded church. The tenants of the Earl's Court estate, and many other farmers of the district, were there. Half a hundred manufacturers and smaller traders had come out from the Great Yard to witness what they harshly termed "the last of the old villain!" And Hammerhampton had sent over two newspaper reporters to watch the proceedings, and describe them for the benefit of readers of the local journals. Indeed, the church was so crowded that the funeral train had some difficulty in working its way up to the open vault, in which John Guerdon's plain coffin was placed, near the costlier chest that contained his wife's body.

Mr. Fairbank read the service for the burial of the dead in solemn tones. But the chief mourner gave small heed to the not always consolatory words of the beautiful office. He shuddered as the priest said, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground." Not that he doubted the assurance that his father's soul was in God's keeping, nor that he undervalued the mercy displayed in his timely removal, but because he realized horribly the shame and sorrow from which the dead man had been mercifully taken.

As Albert, after escaping from the curious throng, and separating himself from the servants who had followed their late master to the grave, walked back to Earl's Court by a private path, he repeated to himself the words of one of the initiatory passages of Scripture with which the rector had opened the ceremony: "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" Yes, John Guerdon had taken nothing away from the world. He had left behind him his pleasant house and fair acres. He had left behind him the world's enmity and injustice. He left behind him a memory blackened with dishonor, and the burden of infamy, which had brought him to the grave. The shame from which he had escaped was his son's heritage. The whole weight of that enormous disgrace had been taken from the dead sire and placed upon his boy.

Knowing, from the tone of Sir James Darling's latest letters, and from the silence which Lottie had been required to observe toward him since his last abrupt departure from her presence, what were the wishes of her parents, Albert was already meditating the steps by which he should withdraw forever from the domestic circle where he would no longer be welcome. Knowing, from fine sympathy with all the forces of her loving nature, what Lottie had endured throughout the days of her silence to and separation from him, he was thinking how he could end their luckless engagement in a way least likely to aggravate her wretchedness.

CHAPTER IX.

AN APPOINTMENT FOR A LAST INTERVIEW.

TOWARD the close of the day following that of John Guerdon's interment, Sir James Darling, after dismissing his clerks, was about to leave his private office in the rear of the Hammerhampton County Court-house, when he was startled by the unannounced appearance of Albert Guerdon, who had sought the judge at that place and time, in order that he might speak with him on particular business, under circumstances which would preserve their intercourse from interruption, and also enable Sir James to withhold the interview from Lottie's knowledge, if he should think it best to do so.

"My dear Albert," exclaimed the judge, who, on finding himself startled into using the familiar form of address, retreated quickly and awkwardly from the too cordial position by an amendment of the greeting—"or rather—ahem! my dear Mr. Guerdon, I had not looked for the pleasure of seeing you to-day; but I am glad of an opportunity to express, more fitly than I could do in my notes, the concern, the very deep concern, which your recent troubles have occasioned me. I have felt for you. All of us at Arleigh have been sharers of your grief. These words come from my heart, believe me, my dear Al—ahem! my dear Mr. Guerdon!"

There was sadness, but no discourtesy, in the smile that passed over Albert's face as he replied, "Call me Albert in the old way, Sir James. Don't be less hearty to me, in what will probably be our last conversation, than you used to be in my happier days. Do not fear that I would misconstrue mere kindness, or that you would compromise yourself by continuing to observe the pleasant forms of an intimacy which is at an end."

"There is no need, Albert," returned Lottie's father, "for you to assure me that you are as delicate in feeling as you have always shown yourself honorable in action. I have never been tempted to persuade myself that you are in any way accountable for the disturbance of our affectionate intercourse—for the embarrassment that has unfortunately arisen between us. Since your last visit to Arleigh, your conduct has been characterized by a fine delicacy," and the little man's rubicund face became more vividly scarlet as he added, "and a noble selfishness."

"I am glad you think so," Albert rejoined; "for your approval of the line which I have taken during the last eight or nine gloomy days renders it easier for me to ask you to let me pay another visit to Arleigh."

At these words Sir James lost something of his color, and he was reverting to his stiff and distant style, as he said with hesitation, "To visit Arleigh?—ahem! Under existing circumstances, there are—ahem!—there are reasons why—"

"You altogether misapprehend my purpose,

Sir James Darling, and you misjudge me," Albert interposed, quickly, "if you suppose that I need to be reminded of circumstances which entitle you to say that my engagement with Miss Darling is at an end. Regarded as an agreement, subject to the execution of certain conditions, which my father lost the power and I am quite unable to perform, the contract for my marriage has become a mere project of the past. Events have canceled it. It is binding on no one. Do not imagine that I need enlightenment on this point, or cherish any delusive and selfish hopes."

Re-assured again, Sir James Darling exclaimed, "My dear Albert, you relieve me immensely by talking in this sensible and very honorable way."

"Moreover, Sir James, you misunderstand me," continued Albert, "if you think that I would visit Arleigh again for my own sake. Indeed, though I am as selfish as most men, I am, have ever been, shall always be, altogether unselfish toward Lottie—let me call her Lottie still. I shall always think of her as Lottie. Am I not right? Though she has been shown that by becoming my wife she would afflict you and her mamma, and would do her sister and brothers a cruel injury, she wavers between love of her family and love of me, between loyal dutifulness to them and loving fidelity to me? She would sacrifice herself, but she can not bring herself to sacrifice me? I know this must be her present state of mind. Throughout all this week I have neither heard her voice nor seen her face, except in fancy, nor had a written word from her. We have had no communication. But I know her condition of distracting affections as precisely as I should have known it had she written to me or talked with me to-day. You can not deny that I have described her trouble, at least its chief perplexity."

For a moment Sir James Darling was on the point of giving an evasive reply, or at least a guarded answer, of caution and reserve. But on second and better thought he answered frankly: "You have stated her case exactly. It may be imprudent of me to admit as much to you, though I have the fullest confidence in your generosity and high principle. But I make the admission. She is so good, and brave, and magnificently unselfish a girl, that she would not hesitate to sacrifice herself. But she can't bring herself to desert you. Rather than be what she calls cruel and false to you, I believe that she would marry you, in spite of my injunctions, her mother's prayers, and her brothers' displeasure. There, Albert, I have said it. I have placed myself, in a certain sense, at your mercy. But I feel safe in havinging done so."

"Listen to me, Sir James, and you will see that your generosity and candor have not been misplaced."

"I am giving heed to every word you say."

"You do not exaggerate my power over her. You are not able to separate us. Were I to

use my influence over her selfishly, without regard for her happiness or my own honor, I could take her from you. At a word from me she would become my wife, on coming of legal age, and then every reproach you should deliver against her or me would only strengthen the barriers of division between you and your child."

"In what I have said, I have admitted as much."

"But at what a price should I have obtained possession of her! She would be the mistress of my humble home, and she would have the consolation of my companionship. But she would pine away slowly to her death in the agonizing consciousness of her disobedience to you and her unkindness to her sister and brothers. Having brought my shame to them, she could not live long under the ignominy which would be her portion as my wife, and which, enormous and black though it would be, she would endure bravely and cheerfully, if she had neither parents, nor brothers, nor sister. Sir James, I know the limits of my power over her. I could make her my wife, but I could not extinguish her affection for her mother and nearest kindred. That affection would survive our marriage; and the remorse it would engender, if she were to marry me, would slowly kill her. And believe me, if my power were far greater, so that I could pluck love of her old home and her own kindred out of her breast, I would not be so wicked and inhuman as to do so. As my wife, she would be utterly wretched, and lose the larger part of her goodness; and, after enduring a few years of misery, that would gnaw out the fairest beauties of her moral nature, she would perish, leaving me to undying remorse for my selfishness in having taken her from you. So you see, I have no purpose to make her mine by marriage. Indeed, if you and Lady Darling and her brothers would consent to the fulfillment of the marriage contract—ay, if you were all to entreat Lottie to marry me, I should urge her to liberate me from my engagement, and let me go my way."

"And yet you wish to see her?" Sir James Darling observed, when he had listened attentively to Albert's full and accurate statement of a strange case of woeful love.

"Yes, in order that, for her sake, I may have an opportunity of persuading her that kindness to me, no less than duty and affection to her kindred by blood, requires her to free me from my promise to her. I alone can make her see that by dismissing me she would show confidence in and love for the man whom nothing would induce her to treat with falseness and cruelty."

"If only you could succeed in making her take this view of the sacrifice which is required of her, you would lay me, Albert, under a heavy debt of gratitude to you."

"Sir," Albert returned, confidently, "*I shall*

succeed in my object. Fear no failure. May I see her to-morrow afternoon?"

"To-morrow it will be impossible for me to be at home to receive you."

"So much the better, Sir James. Of *you* I would rather take leave this afternoon—forever. And surely you can trust me enough to allow me to visit Arleigh Manor once again in your absence."

A far harder and more selfish man than Sir James Darling would have been touched by Albert's magnanimity and forgetfulness of self. But Sir James was neither of a stern nor altogether ungenerous nature. He was vain, fearful of the world's opinion, meanly sensitive for his gentility, and consequently a craven coward toward dangers that threatened him with social disesteem. But he was capable of gratitude and friendship and love. He could also admire virtues which he did not possess. He was enough of a true gentleman to value the chivalric qualities of men who surpassed him in gentlemanly worthiness.

"Upon my honor, Albert," the little man ejaculated, "you speak and act so nobly that you make me feel ashamed of myself. Trust you? I would trust you with any thing but my daughter; and I almost blush for myself that I dare not give her to you." After a pause, he added, hotly, "Give her to you, trust her to you! Why, at this very moment I rely on *you* to give her again to *me*."

Taking the hand which Sir James extended during the utterance of these last words, and grasping it cordially, Albert said,

"Then tell Lottie that she may expect to see me at Arleigh between two and three o'clock to-morrow. You had better inform her of the object of my visit. Indeed, you had better tell her what I have been saying to you. And, Sir James, rely upon it, when you return to your home to-morrow, Lottie will tell you with calmness that she has said good-bye to me forever."

"Albert, God bless you!" responded the judge of the Boringdonshire County Court. "You're a noble fellow, and you'll come to honor, whatever field it may be to which you take your intellect, and energy, and high principle."

"Ere I think of winning honor, Sir James," Albert answered, gravely, "I must disperse the clouds of shame which cover me. My first work in life must be to get money, and pay my father's debts. If it is God's purpose to bless me in this life, he will sooner or later enable me to prove that my poor father was neither the cheat nor forger which men declare him. There, there, Sir James, good-bye. Take my best thanks for your many kindnesses to me."

With these words Albert left Lottie's father, who no sooner found himself alone than he turned redder in the face than ever, and, taking out his big yellow handkerchief, proceeded to polish up his eyelids as though they were pieces of furniture.

CHAPTER X.

"GOOD-BYE, LOTTIE!"

ON entering Lady Darling's morning-room, whither he was conducted, on his arrival at Arleigh Manor on the following afternoon, by a servant who had been instructed that no other visitor should be shown into the same room, Albert noticed that Lottie was dressed in deep mourning. Never was garb of woe more fitly worn by a young woman in the prime of early loveliness than by this girl on whom sorrow had laid a heavy hand. Partner in Albert's misfortunes, she had assumed the dismal dress in token of her grief for his father's death; but there were woes, nearer to her heart, and far deeper than regret for Albert's domestic bereavement, that would have justified her melancholy costume. Knowing that he had come to bid her farewell forever, she mourned for the ending of their tender companionship, and for the death of all her hopes of earthly felicity. But she did not bewail the death of his love for her, or her own love for him. Her heart knew that he was its captain forever, and she needed no assurance that he could never love another as he had loved her. All the more poignant her grief, and all the more her need of visible expressions of her despair, since their mutual affection was undiminished, and their hearts could never be severed, though merciless fate required them to dwell apart from each other, and to pass away forever from one another's sight.

She was alone when he entered the room. Again, in the absence of all curious eyes, they were together; but it was to be their last meeting, and in one brief hour they would have parted. With both her hands she held his right arm, and when he gently put his other arm over her trembling shoulders, she buried her face in his breast, and wept quietly.

"Is it indeed best that we say 'farewell,' when neither of us can ever forget the other, or love the other less?" she asked, when she could control her emotions so as to be able to speak distinctly.

His answer was of many words. Seating himself on a sofa and drawing her to his side, he placed before her mind in clear and irresistible phrases all the weighty reasons why, for the sake of her parents and sister and brothers, she should bravely free him from his promise. At the risk of stirring her pity for him to its depth, and thereby increasing her reluctance to release him, he displayed the hideous shameful and enormous turpitude of the offenses which his father was believed to have perpetrated. Imploring her never to imagine his father capable of committing the crimes laid to his charge, Albert insisted that the dead man's real innocence did not affect the social consequences of the dishonor which rested on his memory. To the world John Guerdon was a thief and felon—the plunderer of his ward, and the practitioner of forgery; and he, Albert, was the son of a rogue and forger. By marrying him she

would impart a felonious taint to her family history, and so exasperate her brothers that, if they did not repudiate her as a cruel sister and false daughter, they would only endure her with thinly veiled repugnance. Cut to their hearts by the spectacle of the domestic severance which would inevitably follow on her union with a forger's son, her father would lose all relish for life, and die slowly; her mother would droop and die quickly. No fanciful terrors or mere fictions of a fastidious refinement caused her father and mother—an incomparably loving pair of parents—to shrink with horror from the thought of her union with a forger's son. They would be wanting in all the finer sensibilities of parental affection, and would show themselves regardless of their obligations to *all* their offspring, if they permitted one of them to make so scandalous an alliance, not less to her own hurt and degradation than to the injury and shame of every other member of her family.

Having spoken thus cogently of the enormous wrongs she would work her own kindred by marrying him, Albert begged her to imagine the injury that would come to herself from so disgraceful a match. Of the poverty which awaited her as his wife, he said nothing; for such a consideration would not have helped to bring her to the conclusion at which he desired her to arrive. He barely glanced at the discomfort and pain which would come to her from the world's scorn of the felon's daughter-in-law; for Albert knew full well that he should not further his purpose by any appeals to her self-interest. But he was very explicit and strenuous in his pictures of the moral hurt which would come to her from a consciousness that she had shamed her father, conferred a color of infamy on her brothers—ay, and killed her own dear mother by a course of action which a few years hence she herself would condemn as selfish and disloyal. Were she to become his wife, the world would brand her as a bad daughter and bad sister, and ere long her own conscience would indorse the judgment of social opinion; and when once her own conscience had condemned her of unfilial and unsisterly behavior, she would become the victim of a fiery remorse that would dry up all her springs of natural goodness, and, after consuming her moral nature, would assail her reason.

And then Albert asked her whether she could continue to love him—at least, continue to think him worthy of her love—if he, foreseeing all the disastrous results of her marriage with him, should seek to make her his wife? He asked that, for *his* sake as well as for her own, she would liberate him. Moreover, he told her that his misfortunes had created for him a duty, on the accomplishment of which he must expend all his mental and physical powers for many years. It devolved on him to undo, as far as possible, the consequences of his dear father's commercial remissness and incompetence. First, he must pay all the old man's lawful debts to

the uttermost farthing, and compensate fully all those who had lost by the failure of the bank. Then he must, for the satisfaction of his own sensitiveness for his father's fame, compensate every one who had lost money through any of those villainies in which the dead man was wrongfully believed to have been Scrivener's coadjutor; and having, as his father's natural executor, paid in full every pecuniary claimant on the bankrupt's estate and honor—having restored her plundered fortune to Blanche Heathcote, and paid Messrs. Pittock & Murphy the money which they had lost by the spuriousness of the acceptance which his father had indorsed in good faith, he must exercise all his ingenuity and detective talents in discovering the evidence of his father's innocence of complicity in his partner's crimes.

"And when you have cleared his memory of shame," Lottie suggested, clinging to a hope that she might live to be the wife of the lover whom she was dismissing, "you will have removed the only obstacle to our marriage. My father and brothers will then rejoice to see me bearing your name and sharing your fortunes. And, in the mean time, I shall have lived cherishing my love of you, and feeding it with anticipations of the joy which will be ours when we marry, with every one's approval."

But Albert was too unselfish and generous to omit to dissuade her from entertaining a hope that would make her heart-sick, and might not be fulfilled even when time should have whitened his hairs.

"No, no, Lottie," he pleaded, in his noble forgetfulness of self, "let us not fetter ourselves with pledges which it is too probable that we shall not be able to fulfill on this side of our old age. Let me, on leaving you, go forth to accomplish my duty in life, strengthened by the hope that, while retaining to your last breath a gentle recollection of me, you may, in the course of years, outgrow your love of me, and so outlive your present self as to be able to give your heart to a man more fortunate than myself, and no less worthy of your affection."

"Oh, Albert," she answered, reproachfully, in the same cooing style of speech that in old times used to clothe her happy thoughts, "you would not think—you can not think my love so shallow, my heart so fickle, my nature so mean, as to deem me, under any circumstances, capable of marrying any one but you. No, no, do not imagine me capable of such levity and falseness. Do not attribute such poverty of spirit to the woman who, twenty years hence, will be as much yours as she ever has been."

"Years hence—say five, or ten, or more if you will—you will, I hope, look back on the joys of these last twelve months as no more than the pleasant incidents of your passage from girlhood to womanly ripeness. You will, I hope, recall without bitterness the sharp griefs which ended the period of joy, and regard them with gratitude rather than regret, as elements of a discipline which wounded your nature in

order to give it strength, and crushed your spirit in order that it should be ever sweeter and braver. And when you can so reflect on the past, remembering me only as the well-loved actor of a time, fruitful to us both of hopes that died in the blossom, may you become a bride, a wife—a mother of children who will never hear my name! Years hence, Lottie, when I hear of the accomplishment of this hope, I shall not charge you with meanness of nature or poverty of spirit. No, believe me; I shall think of you as a woman who has fulfilled all the promise of her noble girlhood."

Three seconds after he had uttered these words, Albert repented that he had spoken so fully and firmly; for, throwing her arms round his neck, Lottie sobbed with a passionate violence which showed how deeply his speech had distressed her.

But her grief lost something of its vehemence when she had wept for ten minutes, and then, nestling in his arms like a frightened bird, she found heart and voice to assure him that no conceivable circumstances would ever render it possible for her to love another man. Out of dutiful love for her kindred, she would forego the hope of ever being his wife, and would make him free of spousal promise, as though he had never known her; but she would not relinquish the love of him—which had been so planted in her heart that it was ineradicable. She would do her best to wear a cheerful face at home and to the world. She would find solace for secret wretchedness in rendering the services of affection to her mother and her mother's children. She would be a good woman, and have the appearance of a happy one. But regarding herself as his wife, although their marriage had never been celebrated, she would in all things behave as became a wife separated from a husband who would return to her in God's time.

"When you asked me to be yours," she assured him, repeating a view of her case which she had given almost in the same words to her mother, "I gave myself to you wholly and unconditionally. From that hour I have been your wife; and your faithful wife I will be till death, as well as misfortunate life, shall part us. To you, with respect to your future life, I say what you a minute since said to me. If, years hence, I shall hear that you are married, I shall not think you fickle or false. Indeed, I should wish you to marry; for your heart is so great and royal that there is room in it for two loves. You will never love any woman as you have loved me; but the woman will be fortunate who is taken to the second place in your heart, and, if she be a good and generous woman, worthy of any entertainment in it, she will not repine or be jealous on finding herself my subordinate in her husband's breast. Far from grudging me my throne, she will love me out of homage to the lord who placed me there. But I can not do this thing which I wish you to do. Mine is only a woman's heart; and

the heart of simple, faithful woman can receive only one dweller."

On this point Albert was compelled to yield to Lottie's equally irresistible and illogical pleadings. He had not anticipated that he would extort from her a promise that, after liberating him from his engagement, she would try to forget him; but he had hoped that her manner of bidding him farewell, if not the very words of her valediction, would afford signs of a disposition to regard herself as about to be absolutely severed from him, in affection no less than in circumstances. His desire was that, in relinquishing her title to his hand, she would recall her vows of fidelity to him, and imply her willingness to look forward to a time when, in her indifference to him, she would be accessible to another suitor. That she could not satisfy this desire, he learned from the pathetic firmness with which she declared her intention to be his faithful spouse unto her life's end, unless his death should make her his widow. Though he regretted, he could not combat this purpose; for it corresponded precisely with his own resolve to wed no other woman. Fate having denied her companionship to him, he had determined that he would pass his days in wifeless wedlock. His heart should enshrine her love; no rival or feeble imitator of her devotion should enter it. Could he complain, or feel surprise, that in this sad purpose he found her nature in harmony with his own? How could he dissuade her from living as he himself meant to live? At least, there were no arguments which he could venture to oppose to her intention, at a moment when she urgently required the solace and encouragement of the consciousness of her unalterable fidelity.

But though he might say nothing to weaken her resolution, he forebore to strengthen it by avowing his own corresponding purpose. Rather than utter words the memory of which might, in the future, exclude her from the joys of marriage, he preferred to conceal his intention to be wifeless throughout life, since she might not be his wife. He preferred to be silent, even though his reticence should cause her to undervalue the completeness of his devotion to her. Rather than say aught which would encourage her to exist, as he meant to exist, in sunless celibacy, cherishing regretfully hopes that had survived the possibility of fulfillment, he was willing that she should misjudge his loyalty, and deem his affection for her less deep, and constant, and unchangeable than her passionate regard for him. So, while she protested that no circumstances should induce her to marry any man but him so long as he should live, Albert guarded his secret jealously, and persisted in a reserve which occasioned her a consolatory hope that, at some distant time, when his grief for their separation should have subsided, she would be told of his marriage to a woman worthy of his love, and therefore qualified to make him happy.

Were he to record all that passed between

the lovers in this meeting for parting, the writer of this page would make disclosures for which the purposes of his story would afford no justification. Rather let each reader, knowing their great love and bitter sorrow, imagine for himself with what pathetic sadness they spoke words of comfort to each other, until Lottie, feeling that her self-control had been taxed to its utmost, and fearing that its complete overthrow might in another minute plunge Albert into deeper misery, implored him to go while she had power to give him a smile with her last lingering kiss.

"Go, Albert—go now," she said, softly. "Every minute added to these last minutes will only make the anguish of separation more intense. You can say nothing more to comfort me; I can say nothing more to make it easier for you to go. O God! since we must go by different ways to heaven, I am thankful, even in this bitter hour, that we part—not because our love has grown cold, but because our love is too strong and pure to blind us to our duty. Oh! go now, dear Albert!"

At which entreaty Albert took Lottie in his arms, as though she were a little child, and laid her gently on the sofa; and then, having kissed her fondly on the lids of her large dark-blue eyes, he walked quickly from the room, without daring to look behind him.

But there was still another woman—a woman altogether forgotten by him in the last minutes of his interview with Lottie—whom Albert had to bid farewell.

He had descended from the higher floor, on which was Lady Darling's room, and in another minute he would have been in the garden of the manor-house, when, as he paced from the foot of the staircase to the outward threshold of the mansion, Mary Darling opened the drawing-room door and hastened toward him with extended arms. Putting a hand on each of his shoulders, she kissed him tenderly and passionately, as though he had been one of her own boys going forth to a scene of war. Drawing him within the room from which she had issued a moment before, the excited woman kissed him again, and then, while the tears ran down her faded cheeks, she said, with almost prophetic vehemence,

"Albert, be brave and trustful. Lottie shall be your wife even yet. My heart—a power above us both, speaking to my heart and through it—assures me that you will live to marry her. I shall not be alive to dress her for the wedding, for my strength is leaving me, and I am on my way to the heaven where the faint and weary go when all their earthly strength is done. But I shall be with you on your bridal-day; and, when you kneel in church by Lottie's side, I shall be near you. Think of me then; for, Albert, *then* the spirit of the woman who brought Lottie into this strange, sad world, and loved you as dearly as she loved her own sons, will bring you a blessing from the brightest garden of paradise!"

Scarcely had Albert put a kiss on the brow of the speaker of these words when he was once more alone. The utterer of the prediction and the promise had slipped from his embrace and vanished as soon as she had accomplished her purpose.

Then Albert, escaping from the house, passed through its fair gardens in the direction of Earl's Court. It was thus that he bade Lottie "farewell," and went from her home, on the afternoon of the very day that had been chosen for their wedding.

CHAPTER XI.

ALBERT RETIRES FROM BORINGDONSHIRE.

WHEN he had bidden Lottie adieu, it was still necessary for Albert Guerdon to spend several days in Boringdonshire before he could withdraw from the scene of his domestic misadventures.

Earl's Court and the remnants of the bankrupt's personal property had already passed into the hands of the assignees, who were appointed to realize the estate of Messrs. Guerdon & Scrivener for the benefit of their creditors. But ere he felt himself at liberty to retire from the Great Yard, John Guerdon's son was required to hold several conferences with the liquidators, and give them information which no other person could have afforded them so readily.

There were also several other persons living near Owleybury, or in the Great Yard, with whom it was needful for him to transact business or exchange words of courtesy, ere he could turn away forever from his old home.

At some expense of time, as well as of money, he was careful to pay all the debts which he had incurred to tradesmen of Hammerhampton or of the cathedral town. He wrote also at considerable length to Blanche Heathcote, expressing his profound sorrow at her loss of fortune, stating his hope to replace her plundered wealth in the course of years, and informing her that her farm was a mineral property, and therefore much more valuable than she had hitherto supposed it to be. In reply to this letter, he received from Blanche an epistle that was equally creditable to her good taste and womanly feeling. Thanking him for his information respecting her land, which might soon yield her a larger income than the revenue of her transferred Consols, she assured Albert that she was quite rich enough, and begged him to relinquish his purpose of laboring to indemnify her for an injury for which she held his father to have been in no way accountable. Besides expressing her confidence in the integrity of her father's closest friend, she declared in simple words her regard for his good qualities, and her grateful recollection of his many kindnesses to her.

To weaken the force of testimony against his father's memory, Albert could not at pres-

ent do all that he hoped to accomplish. But on withdrawing from the Owleybury neighborhood, he carried with him some papers, and pieces of information, which he hoped would assist him to accomplish one part of his filial undertaking. Through Mr. Farncombe's influence in Threadneedle Street, he had obtained a fac-simile of the spurious power of attorney. Messrs. Pittock & Murphy, of King William Street, London, had furnished him with an exact lithographic copy of the forged acceptance; and, together with these specimens of Mr. Scrivener's calligraphic skill, Albert had packed in the secret drawer of his writing-desk several characteristic specimens of the forger's penmanship, and some equally good examples of John Guerdon's handwriting. The day, he hoped, would come when the judgment of experts in handwriting would co-operate with stronger evidence to satisfy the world that Gimlett Scrivener's hand had produced John Guerdon's signature on the power of attorney, and Josias Radley's signature on the acceptance.

Of the spuriousness of the signatures of the two attesting witnesses on the power of attorney, Albert, in the interval between his father's death and interment, had obtained such conclusive testimony that he had no need to preserve specimens of Jacob Coleman's penmanship, or examples of William Markworthy's style of writing. While Jacob Coleman could demonstrate conclusively that he was at Liverpool throughout the entire week, on the middle day of which he was represented to have attested his employers' signatures in George Street, Hammerhampton, the records of the Registrar of Deaths for St. George's parish, Hammerhampton, certified that on the same day William Markworthy, formerly a clerk in the employment of Messrs. Guerdon & Scrivener, had been dead for an entire fortnight. Of course, Albert did not disappear from the Great Yard ere he had caused Jacob Coleman, Mr. Gleed, the Registrar of Deaths, and certain corroborating witnesses, to make sworn depositions to this effect before the stipendiary magistrate of Hammerhampton. Of course, also, his collection of documents relating to the forgeries contained duly attested copies of these sworn depositions.

In his lively satisfaction with the evidence embodied in the depositions, Albert at first overrated its ability to remove the stains of felony from his father's character. It proved conclusively that forgery had been employed in the fabrication of the power of attorney; and in his unwavering belief in his father's innocence of crime, Albert for a brief while imagined that, to clear his sire's fame of all suspicion of complicity in the fraud, it was only necessary for him to publish the proofs of the forgery of the witnesses' signatures. But a few minutes' reflection was enough to moderate his exultation at the discovery, and to enable him to see the point at which the evidence fell

short of his purpose. Having neither a conviction of John Guerdon's innocence of heinous crime, nor even a disposition to think him incapable of felony, the world would draw no inferences in his favor from the fact that the signatures of Jacob Coleman and William Markworthy had been shown to be fictitious. In their judgment of the dead man, cold and wary critics of the evidence would be scarcely at all affected by the depositions, which only proved the forgery of four signatures—*i. e.*, the repeated signatures of the two attesting witnesses. Going no further than the testimony, they would say, "The proof of the spuriousness of Jacob Coleman's signatures and William Markworthy's signatures is no proof that either John Guerdon's signature or his partner's signature is a forgery. It does not show that either partner was a victim of the other's fraud. If it affords some ground for suspecting that such was the case, it does not, *by itself*, even indicate which was the forger, and which the unoffending victim."

Albert saw this. It was obvious to him that critical opinion would decide that Gimlett Scrivener had, *prima facie*, as good a title as John Guerdon to whatever exculpating inferences could be drawn from the mere and present proof of forgery. Until it could be shown positively that John Guerdon had neither assisted in nor connived at the forgery, ordinary men would continue to regard him as his co-trustee's confederate in the crime. Of course, under all the circumstances of the case, Scrivener's action in instructing the broker, and in paying Blanche Heathcote her dividends for three years after the transference of the Consols, left no room for doubt that he had done his full part in the theft of her money. But the certainty of his guilt would not weaken society the evidence against John Guerdon, who (for all that the world knew) was no less likely than his partner to have forged the spurious signatures of Coleman and Markworthy. In the general opinion, John Guerdon and Gimlett Scrivener were equals in rascality. Though the power of attorney and the bill of acceptance were the only cases of forgery in which he was known to have been concerned, Scrivener's other nefarious proceedings in the Great Yard proved him a prodigious rogue. On the other hand, it was certain that John Guerdon had himself indorsed the forged bill, which he gave to Messrs. Pittock & Murphy, of King William Street, London. Under these circumstances, it would be unreasonable to suppose that public opinion would acquit John Guerdon of complicity in the forgery of Jacob Coleman's and William Markworthy's signatures, unless it could also be proved that his own apparently genuine signature on the power of attorney was also fictitious.

Was John Guerdon, like Jacob Coleman and William Markworthy, absent from Hammerhampton on June 3, 184—, the day on which he was represented by the entries of the docu-

ment to have executed the power of attorney in George Street? If he could only answer this question in a manner agreeable to his wishes, Albert perceived that, so far as the power of attorney was concerned, his father's honor would be cleared. Among the papers which he, a few days later, took with him from the Great Yard, he had abundant testimony that Scrivener was at Hammerhampton on the day in question. If it could be demonstrated that, while Jacob Coleman was at Liverpool, and William Markworthy in the grave, on June 3, 184—, John Guerdon was at the same time so far from Hammerhampton that it was impossible for him to have signed the paper at George Street on the day named, there would be evidence to satisfy any jury that John Guerdon's signature on the document was as spurious as the signatures of the attesting witnesses, and that the whole forgery had been perpetrated by the only trustee who could have signed the instrument at the stated time in Hammerhampton. It was no less clear to Albert that the world would undergo a sudden revulsion of feeling toward his unfortunate father, and would altogether reverse its previous judgment of the senior partner of Guerdon & Scrivener, if it could be shown that Guerdon was altogether innocent, and Scrivener alone guilty, of this grandest villainy. The testimony of calligraphic experts would then be sufficient to satisfy social opinion that the false signature of Josias Radley on the repudiated acceptance was the work of the same hand which had so successfully forged the several spurious signatures on the power of attorney. John Guerdon's indorsement of the fictitious bill, taken from Scrivener's hands, would then appear the innocent act of a man having ordinary confidence in his partner's probity. Satisfied of the dead man's innocence of complicity in the two crimes of which they had supposed him guilty, the Great Yard and the outer world would review leniently the whole of his career, and acquit him of every thing more reprehensible than commercial incompetence. Smitten with generous compunction for their injustice toward the banker, whom they had stigmatized as a villain, when he was nothing worse than a villain's stupid tool, the capitalists of London and Hammerhampton would acknowledge emphatically that he had lived and died an honest man.

But disappointment attended Albert's search for positive evidence of his father's absence from Hammerhampton on June 3, 184—. In vain he examined diaries, letter-books, files of bills, ledgers, and old letters, preserved at Hammerhampton and Earl's Court. In vain he spoke with Mr. Coleman on the subject, urging him to produce every thing which might yield the requisite evidence. Mr. Coleman was, or seemed to be, powerless to give the needful information. Being in Liverpool, as he remarked with apparent justice, he could not be answerable for Mr. Guerdon's whereabouts on the

particular day. For all the chief clerk knew, or, at least, would confess to knowing, Mr. Guerdon might have been at Hammerhampton, or at Edinburgh, or the Lizard. After the lapse of three years, it was, under the circumstances, impossible for Mr. Coleman to remember, even if he had ever known, what were Mr. Guerdon's private engagements at the time in question. And the documents, stored away in closets and chests and drawers at Earl's Court and George Street, were not more communicative than the late cashier of Guerdon & Scrivener's bank.

For the greater part of his life, John Guerdon had been a diary keeper. His journals were kept with characteristic irregularity and looseness. At times he noted down his doings with nice attention to details of time, place, and expenditure; and then for weeks together he omitted to record his transactions. Still he always had a diary in hand; and on filling up the last page of another small, square note-book, he used to thrust it into one of the drawers of the large writing-table in his bank parlor, and there leave it in company with dozens of similar manuscript volumes. Naturally Albert hoped to get from one of these diaries the needful intelligence. But though the series of note-books was otherwise complete, the collection contained no diary for the year in which Blanche Heathcote's consols were sold. Albert was equally unfortunate in his patient examination of official records, and piles upon piles of dusty paper. Nowhere, either at George Street or Earl's Court, could he find a single scrap of paper which showed his father to have been away from Hammerhampton on the day of iniquity.

Nor did he find in the masses of manuscript papers and books a single entry certifying John Guerdon's presence at the bank on the particular day. Abundant were the proofs of Mr. Scrivener's presence and activity in George Street on June 3, 184-, and on the ten days immediately preceding and following it. Evidence also was abundant that Mr. Guerdon had been at the bank on every day throughout the last week of May, and on every day throughout the second week of June. But there was nothing to prove where or how he had spent the intervening time. Had the banker been absent from Hammerhampton, it must have devolved on one of the junior clerks to enter in a register the direction and postal marks of his private letters, together with notes of the time at which such letters had been delivered in George Street, and the addresses to which they had been forwarded, in case orders had been given for their transmission. This register would, of course, show whether Mr. Guerdon had been an absentee from the Great Yard in the first week of June, 184-. But, when Albert called for it, no one could find it. Like the private diary for the same year, the Absent Letter Register for 184- was missing. The inferior clerks in George Street, and the servants at Earl's

Court, were quite unable to speak to the point. They knew nothing about the matter.

It was consolatory to the baffled seeker that he came upon no evidence of John Guerdon's presence in Hammerhampton during the momentous week. The absence of such testimony, of course, strengthened his belief that his father was at that time away from the Great Yard. But negative testimony was not enough for the searcher, who wanted to prove positively that, while Mr. Scrivener was forging signatures in George Street, John Guerdon was at some distant part of the country, if not beyond seas.

In the hope that some one of John Guerdon's numerous clients or personal acquaintances could afford the information, which could not be extorted from silent papers or forgetful servants, Albert inserted the following advertisement in the *London Times* and the *Hammerhampton Iron Times*:

"Forgery — Further Evidence required.— Whereas a certain Power of Attorney, purporting to be executed at Hammerhampton by Gimlett Scrivener and John Guerdon on June 3, 184-, has been proved to be a forgery in respect of the signatures of two attesting witnesses; and whereas there are good grounds for the opinion that the signature of the said John Guerdon on the said power is also spurious: A Reward of £100 is offered to any person who shall furnish conclusive testimony as to the place where the said John Guerdon, late banker of George Street, Hammerhampton, and of Earl's Court, Boringdonshire, spent the aforementioned day, June 3, 184-. Communications to be addressed to Albert Guerdon, Esq., Post-office, Hammerhampton."

Having put forth this advertisement, and directed that it should re-appear daily in the aforementioned journals for an entire month, Albert Guerdon remained at Earl's Court for another ten days, hoping that each successive day would bring him the required information. But he hoped and waited in vain. Not a single communication was elicited by the advertisements, although, in addition to the publicity which Albert obtained for them by payments of money, they gained further notoriety from the notice taken of them by journalists in every part of the country, who spoke with derisive commiseration of the son's romantic desire to purge his father's fame of indelible marks of villainy.

On the expiration of the ten days of disappointment, Albert Guerdon went up to London, and resided for three weeks at a private hotel, whither he had requested the Hammerhampton postmaster to forward to him any letters which might be directed to him at any Boringdonshire address.

Besides his writing-desk and its papers, the few presents which Lottie had given him during their engagement, a few volumes of his favorite authors, and three large portmanteaus, containing his wardrobe and articles of toilet,

Albert carried away from Earl's Court nothing of the personal property which he would have been justified in taking from the mansion. His horse and library, his guns and dogs, his antique coins and collection of old prints, he left to the auctioneer's hammer, as things to which his father's creditors had a moral title, since they had been bought with the bankrupt's money. As for Lottie's presents, the circumstances under which his engagement with her had terminated made him feel that he could not, without indelicacy or unkindness, restore to her the tributes of an affection which had lost nothing of its fervor and completeness. Lovers and spouses still, though cut off from all hope of intermarriage, they retained the *arrhal* tokens which each had given to the other in happier days. The chief contents of his writing-desk were Lottie's letters, and the unromantic papers which he hoped would ultimately contribute to the restoration of his father's character.

Regarding his father's debts as obligations touching his own honor, Albert had not, without reluctance and much thought, decided to retain his small maternal inheritance of £5000, which had been transferred to him by his mother's trustees, some nine or ten months before the fall of the George Street bank. His first impulse was to throw his little fortune into the hands of the liquidators of his father's estate. But on reflecting that, by this sacrifice of his "modest independence," he would greatly diminish his ability to win a fortune for the payment of his father's creditors, he determined, for their sake no less than his own, to preserve the means for placing himself in some field of lucrative industry. Added to the assets of the bankrupt's estate, the five thousand pounds would not materially augment the dividend immediately payable to claimants. On the other hand, he might so employ the capital that in the course of years it would develop into wealth sufficient for the full payment of every sufferer from the bankruptcy. But, though he wisely decided to "keep his own," Albert determined to keep it as a steward, holding the property in trust for the good of others.

The sequel will show whether he was a faithful trustee and successful steward.

CHAPTER XII.

MOMENTOUS QUESTIONS.

THOUGH he was rich in attainments and natural gifts, that would have justified the desire by realizing the ambition for social distinction, Albert Guerdon had hitherto been singularly free from the young man's yearning for celebrity and honors. He had never wished to figure brilliantly in the world of fashion. He had never even considered his ability to win the prizes of the learned professions. It had not occurred to him that he might enter Parlia-

ment as a member for one of the Boringdonshire boroughs, and place himself among the notabilities of politics. So free was he from the restlessness and illusions of vanity, that, on making arrangements to succeed to his father's business and to "settle down" in Boringdonshire, he had never regarded himself as accepting a position inferior to his merits. A career of provincial usefulness and domestic felicity—a life of honest work and fireside love—was all that he had asked of Fortune, so long as the fickle goddess had smiled on him, and exhibited a disposition to grant him more than he required.

On losing wealth, local influence, rural honor, he suddenly became ambitious. On finding himself poor, friendless, and covered with obloquy, he took stock of his mental forces and physical endowments, and, comparing himself with men who had rendered themselves greatly fortunate, he began to think that he might imitate and even surpass them. A life of shame was hateful beyond endurance. Worldly success and power were treasures to be desired and fought for. He would conquer his adverse circumstances. By the exercise of his strong and versatile intellect, by the aid of his address and bodily graces, by the help of his persuasive voice and sympathetic insight into character, and by the assiduous employment of every means agreeable to gentlemanly instincts, he would make himself rich and honored. But it may not be supposed that his ambition was an offspring of egotistic vanity. It was no vulgar greed for personal aggrandizement. He resolved to achieve social success, not that he might enjoy it, but that he might render it subservient to his one grand and unselfishly filial purpose—the restoration of his father's name. He wanted wealth to pay his father's debts. He wanted influence and dignity, as instruments which would aid him in purging his father's memory of disgrace. For himself he wanted nothing—but escape from infamy, and the satisfaction of seeing his father re-instated in the world's good opinion.

Yes, there was one other thing which he desired for his own gratification. Since Lottie might never be his wife, he wanted to see her happily married. For *her* felicity and *his* own consolation he desired this. He was a man fast growing stronger and sterner under the discipline of sorrow. He could endure the gloom of celibacy, and even learn to smile at his merciless fate. He had the solace of a grand purpose toward a dead father. In achieving this purpose he would find diversion and employment. But Lottie's state appeared to him far more cruel than his own. She—a tender, gentle, yielding girl—would live in dull, incessant misery, that would be broken by no congenial excitements. Bereft of him, she had no grand object in existence. For a while she would find a soothing labor in rendering filial services to her mother. But Lady Darling would not long survive the shock of recent disasters, and

Albert shuddered as he imagined the forlorn and unvarying dejection in which Lottie would spend her blank, objectless existence when she would no longer have a dying mother to nurse. His spirit groaned as he realized the dolefulness of her estate. He seemed the murderer of her felicity, when he thought how happy she might have been throughout all her days, had he never crossed her path, and won her love. For his own peace of mind, no less than for her good, it was necessary that she should so far forget him—at least, so far outlive the intensity of her affection for him—as to be capable of responding to the love of another man. Domestic isolation and life-long exclusion from the mysterious joys of marriage would be endurable to him, if he could think of her as the possessor of wifely honor and happiness.

But how could a state of things be brought about in which she might be induced to accept another proposal of marriage? The more that he pondered this question, the stronger was Albert's conviction that, so long as she believed him to be alive, Lottie would regard herself as his wife, and never think of marrying any one else. It might be otherwise if he were to die, or if circumstances should induce her to imagine him to be dead. Regarding herself, then, as his widow, she might, after mourning for his death, pass from regret to a condition of feeling in which she would be acceptable to another suitor. Why, then, since his life was an obstacle to her happiness, should he not put an end to his existence? There were two obvious reasons why he might not take this step. Even for her sake he might not commit the sin of suicide. Moreover, his life had been solemnly devoted to the task of relieving his father's name of infamy. Until he had accomplished this sacred task his life was the property of the dead. Not even for Lottie's welfare might he neglect his obligations to his father's memory. But why should he not, by the exercise of human artifice, ay, even by the employment of pious fraud, persuade Lottie that death had taken him?"

When this thought had taken shape in Albert's mind, he had two great subjects for consideration. On ceasing to meditate the one, he mused upon the other. The more urgent question related to his choice of a pursuit by which he might win wealth and power. The more fascinating question had reference to the measures by which he might cause Lottie to think him dead. The living girl and the dead man—Lottie in her bitter grief, and John Guerdon in his shameful grave—were seldom absent from his imagination in his wakeful hours. How should he die to one and live for the other? How should he compass *her* happiness, and restore *his* honor?

Slowly sketching out and filling in a scheme for the achievement of these ends, even as a novelist gradually designs and elaborates a story, Albert wrote out on the tablets of fancy one chief drama of his life before he acted it. Re-

jecting, after due deliberation, a score different ways of living, but taking from his survey of each of these possible careers a hint or suggestion which helped him to his final decision, he eventually selected a field of exertion which accident first proposed to his consideration. It was the same with the several ways by which it occurred to him that he could make Lottie think him dead. And when casual circumstances had aided imagination and judgment to furnish him with suitable plans for working and perishing, unlooked-for incidents helped him to carry them out.

At this crisis of his life, he knew less of London than of half a dozen continental cities—less of it, in fact, than most English lads of gentle birth know of their country's capital. He had few friends in the great city, and none whom he wished to encounter. He lived alone in the vast multitude of busy toilers and restless pleasure-seekers. And in default of better pastime, he perambulated the streets of the town, from east to west, and from north to south, studying its topography systematically, while he pondered how he should work for his father and die to Lottie. Sometimes he made his way into a theatre, and watched the actors, whose words could not free him even for an hour from his two engrossing and fascinating subjects of painful thought. But more often, after fatiguing himself with a walk of many miles, and dining in solitude, he spent the hours between dinner and bed-time in the smoking-room and billiard-room of his hotel, watching the players of the game, or listening to the chat of the smokers. He rarely spoke to any one. The frequenters of the hotel thought the handsome young man strangely silent, and, after making a few fruitless attempts to draw him into conversation, left him to himself and his moodiness. Albert, on the other hand, wondered whether any of them had ever been as wretched as he was.

It was during one of his perambulations of the hot town that Albert, shortly before the dispersion of the lawyers for the Long Vacation, sauntered down Chancery Lane, and turning into one of the vice-chancellor's courts, in Lincoln's Inn, heard the opening of a petition. A copyright case of no great importance, the petition interested the young man so much that, having sat through the day among the wearers of horse-hair wigs and stuff-gowns, he re-appeared on the morrow at the opening of the court, and heard the rest of the arguments and the vice-chancellor's judgment.

It is told of Erskine that a casual visit to a court of justice decided him to exchange the red coat for the black robe, and to enter the profession in which he rose rapidly to its highest place. The future chancellor, with characteristic self-confidence, felt that he could have "done better" than either of the advocates to whom he had listened. Without thinking so disdainfully of the two queen's counsel who had entertained him, Albert quitted Lincoln's Inn, after his second visit to the court-house, with a de-

cided opinion that the work which they had done well was work that he also could accomplish successfully. He felt, also, that the advocacy of the chancery bar was an art in which he could excel, when he had mastered the principles of equity, and acquired a sufficient knowledge of the practice of the courts. Conscious of his power to interpret perplexing statements and to express himself in clear and concise language, he could not question his natural competency for the highest labor of a profession in which men of only average capacity may with assiduous industry figure respectably. Notwithstanding his freedom from inordinate self-esteem, he knew that he possessed conversational tact and discretion, and could speak at the same time firmly and courteously.

Why should not the chancery bar be his field of enterprise?

Having put this question to himself on leaving the vice-chancellor's court, he occupied himself during his westward walk with arguing mentally for and against the proposal.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHOICE OF A PROFESSION.

ON ceasing to hope that his advertisements for information about his father's movements on June the 3d, 184-, would prove successful, Albert Guerdon went to the south of France. He explored a part of the Pyrenees on foot, musing on his past troubles, and deliberating on his plans for the future, as he made his solitary wanderings through one of the most picturesque regions of Europe.

Returning to London in the middle of the following October, he took possession of a lodging in Manchester Street, Manchester Square, under the assumed name of Wright. Exercise on the mountains had brought him into perfect bodily vigor. The quietude of his companionless holiday had benefited his spirits and temper. If he had not recovered his cheerfulness, he had gathered fortitude, resignation, and a mournful hope from the solemn stillness and silence of the majestic hills. He had also brought back to his native land some definite views and firm resolves; of these it is needful that a few should be stated.

He had decided to make Lottie think him dead; and he had more than a general notion of the measures by which he would so mislead her. Separating himself completely from his past life, he would bury his name and shame in a tomb that should purport to be also the receptacle of his body. A coffin bearing his name should be placed in a grave which other persons besides Lottie should be induced to regard as his last resting-place. It might be possible for him to provide the coffin with a lifeless form; but should he be unable to furnish the chest so appropriately, it should be weighted with stones, and then committed to the earth in the

presence of mercenary mourners, who should believe the legend on its plate. For all the details of this sham burial of himself he had not made arrangements on entering his new quarters in Manchester Street. But his mind, practical and fertile in expedients, had already offered him half a dozen original schemes for putting himself out of existence with every attention to mortuary regulations. He was familiar with the processes by which law, divinity, and physic may be tricked into giving every appearance of reality to a mock interment.

There stands on a piece of unconsecrated ground, in a corner of one of our most fashionable and picturesque London cemeteries, a work of monumental sculpture whose white marble is inscribed with these words, "In Memory of Laura, Aged Eleven Years." Albert knew that Laura, during her eleven years of life, was a Blenheim spaniel that after death received sumptuous interment from a gentlewoman of rank and wealth, who, after burying her pet animal, mourned for her as for a daughter. The exact site of the tomb was never set apart as sacred; but the inscription causes the stone to be mistaken for a memorial of parental grief and love.

Another mock burial, which had come to Albert's knowledge, was the impudent fraud of a criminal adventurer who brought a coffin from France to a London cemetery, and, after interring it with religious rites, proceeded to act as though he were the lawful executor of the alleged occupant of the grave. Having proved at Doctors' Commons what purported to be the last will of his deceased friend, the impostor exhibited a policy for £2000, and actually obtained payment of the bond from a London Life Assurance Office before it was ascertained that the insurer was still alive, and that the buried coffin was empty. Long before the vacant chest was exhumed and broken open, the sham executor, with the two thousand pounds in his pocket, was beyond the reach of justice.

Knowing, from these cases, that it was possible, though difficult, to achieve spurious sepulture in a London grave-yard, it is not wonderful that Albert, in his desire to destroy the proofs of his identity with the forger's son, and in his wish to mislead Lottie, debated seriously whether he could not do much for the accomplishment of his double purpose by burying himself and being his own executor. Nor is it surprising that, having once allowed himself to imagine so strange a fraud on society, he resolved to execute it for his own safety and Lottie's welfare.

Enough has been said of the reasons which determined Albert to adopt a course of concealment and deception for Lottie's sake. But something should be told of the considerations which decided him to take the same course for his own convenience. It is consistent with human egotism that the young and sensitive should overestimate the celebrity and conspicuousness of their newest distinctions. Whether

the mark be an ensign of honor or a brand of shame, the newly distinguished young man is apt to imagine that his world is co-extensive with civilized society, and that the badge which makes him famous or shameful in his special circle renders him notorious throughout a kingdom, and even recognizable wherever he goes. Every one has heard of the youthful senior wrangler who, on entering a London opera-house shortly after the publication of the mathematical tripos which his name headed, took to himself the cheers which welcomed the queen on her simultaneous entrance into the theatre. The under-graduate who has just been plucked in the schools is no less apt to imagine his disgrace a matter of universal interest.

In like manner, living in a bitter sense of degradation, and thinking only of matters closely connected with his domestic disasters, Albert fell into the natural mistake of exaggerating the general curiosity respecting his personal troubles. So long as the crash of the Hammerhampton bank was a new event, and journalists made it a topic for vehement writing, it would have been strange had he formed a cool and dispassionate estimate of the public interest in the scandalous affair. Had he been less sensitive of shame or less deeply wounded in his affections, he would have recovered sooner from the moral shock and mental disturbance occasioned by his misfortunes. As soon as the papers, forbearing to denounce his father's villainy, directed their virtuous indignation against delinquents of a later date, he would have seen that events were already pushing the George Street failure out of social recollection; and that, on ceasing to rage against Guerdon & Scrivener, the world would begin to forget them. He would have known that society has a short memory, and that, having vented its fury in bitter words, it quickly dismisses from its consideration the persons and circumstances that have stirred its wrath. But though his good sense and worldly knowledge would have enabled him to regard another's misfortunes thus judiciously, he could not take the same consolatory view of his own afflictions. It appeared to him that, until John Guerdon's honesty should be demonstrated, the world would not only refrain from doing him positive justice, but would also be incessantly thinking of his infamy. Equally obvious to his morbid imagination was it that, so long as he continued to bear his father's name, the forger's son would encounter abhorrence and detestation at every turn. Hence his resolution to escape from shameful associations by assuming another name. Having, for Lottie's sake, made her and all the world think him dead, he would start again in life with a name and under disguises which should liberate him as far as possible from imperishable infamy.

It is usual for the offspring and near cousins of egregious criminals to sever themselves from their odious misfortune by taking names of fair repute before they re-establish themselves in

life, under circumstances which may guard their private shame from detection; and in the world's opinion Albert was the child of a prodigious scoundrel. Believing, therefore, that the discredit accruing to him from his father's infamy would be an insuperable obstacle to his social advancement wherever he should be recognized as John Guerdon's son, he would have resolved to conceal his parentage, even if his purpose toward Lottie had not required him to disassociate himself from his previous history. But when he reflected that, by continuing to style himself Albert Guerdon after she had been induced to think him dead, he would be calling her attention to his doings, and exposing his humane imposture to constant risk of detection, it became obvious to him that regard for her, no less than care for himself, enjoined him to take another name.

Yet further, to separate himself from his domestic dishonor, and to secure his secret from discovery, he had determined to remove as far as possible the physical evidences of his identity with Albert Guerdon of Boringdonshire. Of the several important matters which he had revolved during his companionless Pyrenean rambles, none had occupied more of his thought than certain schemes for changing his appearance. He had asked to what extent he could disfigure himself without surrendering any of his physical endowments, which would be valuable aids to him in the subsequent battle of life. How could he change his color without giving himself a repulsive complexion? What coiffure should he adopt for the sake of disguise, without altogether sacrificing the advantage of abundant hair? How could he alter his features without mutilating them barbarously, or losing that perfect command of the facial muscles which it was needful for him to retain? How far could he change his face without rendering it hideous, or even depriving it of serviceable comeliness? By what means could he relinquish some of the distinguishing characteristics of his figure, and replace them by other appearances, without lessening his shapeliness and masculine style? These were questions which he had carefully considered; and though he could not answer them precisely to his satisfaction, he knew enough of the principles and artifices of personal disguise to be confident that, by a careful selection of the means of concealment, and by a nice employment of them, he could so change his bodily aspect that he would not be recognizable to his ordinary acquaintance.

Having adopted a new name and new appearance, Mr. Albert Wright, lodger, of 35 Manchester Street, Manchester Square, meant to lose no time in qualifying himself for the profession in which he hoped to win status and wealth. Impressed with a lively sense of the need for wariness and circumspection in all his preliminary movements, he was resolved to take no step for the accomplishment of any one of his several purposes without cautious delibera-

tion and suspicious forethought for all untoward contingencies. But on one chief point he had quite made up his mind. He would join an Inn of Court, become the pupil of an eminent Equity lawyer, and by strenuous study acquire the knowledge requisite for the achievement of success at the Chancery Bar.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

MR. ALBERT WRIGHT had occupied his lodging in Manchester Street, Manchester Square, just ten days, when, toward the end of October, Fortune put into his hands an excellent instrument for his use in the execution of one of his designs.

The day had been summerly, as days often are in the later weeks of October, and Albert had spent it sauntering about the pleasant country north and north-west of Hampstead Heath. Having made a leisurely *détour* from "The Spaniards" to Finchley, and from Finchley to Willesden, he had dined, shortly after dusk, at a suburban tavern, and then, refreshed with food and wine, and a long rest, he had continued his solitary exercise by the light of the rising moon; so that, after spending many hours in the fresh air and autumnal beauties of half a dozen rural parishes, he re-entered London by the Bayswater Road, shortly before midnight. Of an age when the human body is not readily fatigued, if it is in good health and training, he had not wearied himself by his walk of many miles; and if he loitered over the southward pavement of Portman Square, his slowness was not due to exhaustion, but to the wish to finish his half-smoked cigar before he should turn into his chambers for the night.

The square was quiet. No lights were visible in the windows of its grander mansions, for their owners, like all the rest of the great world, were out of town. The smaller houses, pertaining to West End doctors, or other professional folk with connections of aristocratic employers, were also shut up and darkened for the night. The last omnibus for St. John's Wood had rumbled northward over the square, and jolted sluggishly up Baker Street some ten minutes before the unwearied pedestrian decided to pace the deserted pavements of the quadrangle till the tip of his regalia should scorch his lips.

Acting on this resolution, Albert was loitering on the northward flag-stones, enjoying the stillness which, without being broken by the sound of nearer wheels, was only rendered more soothing by the faintly audible hum of Oxford Street and Edgeware Road, when he started, and turned sharply round in the direction of a cry of pain uttered by a sufferer within ten yards of his feet. The almost vacant square was well supplied with gas-lamps, and the moon was shining in a cloudless sky; but,

though there was no lack of light, Albert could not discern the creature from whom the note of anguish had proceeded, until the cry, at an interval of several moments, had been followed by a groan.

Then, looking to the very point where the disturber of his meditations lay in shadow cast by masonry and palisades of iron, Albert saw the figure of a man extended on the stone floor beneath a high portico, with his head at the threshold and his feet at the entrance steps of one of the largest mansions of the square.

Having glanced at the recumbent figure with momentary resentment, Albert was on the point of turning away and passing onward, under the impression that he had been startled into misdirected sympathy for a vagrant drunkard, who, having stupefied himself at a gin-palace, had found as good a couch as he deserved. But another cry and groan caused Albert to take a gentler and juster view of the sick man's case. Such sounds were not the mere results of intoxication. If he were drunk, the poor fellow was also in the grip of some execrating malady which liquor had only aggravated. It might be that he was sober, and dying of cholera. No sooner had these possibilities occurred to Albert than he sprang up the steps, and, stooping downward, raised the head of the prostrate man. In another three seconds he had drawn him out of the shadow of his lurking corner into the full light of an adjacent gas-lamp. As he did so, Albert recognized the worn and disfigured features of one of his old comrades at Bonn and Heidelberg. Distorted though it was by present pain, and blighted though it was by previous misery, the face of the outcast was the face of Reginald Albert Otway, whilom student of languages at Bonn, and subsequently art student at Antwerp, Munich, and Rome.

"Good heavens, Otway, is it you?" Albert ejaculated, seeing signs of consciousness in the tortured visage.

"Otway; yes—yes—Otway. I am Otway. You know me! Who the deuce are you?" Otway replied, slowly and drowsily, as though he did not fully realize the position.

"You are very ill!"

"Eh, very ill! I have been that for many a day; but now, thank God, I am dying."

"Not so bad as that."

"Quite as good as that," returned the sufferer, with increasing animation and intelligence. "And, since you know me, and seem friendly, I give you timely notice and advice. Clear off at once. If you wait till I am dead, my corpse will be on your hands. It may be awkward for you."

"Never mind that, old boy. Since I am here, I'll see you through your attack, however it may end."

"You had better not," Otway replied faintly, gasping as he spoke. "Go at once. You can leave me now with a good grace; but, if I die in your arms, you won't be quit of me till you have attended an inquest, and buried me."

The parish will expect you to bury me at your own expense. There, be off, or you'll be in for no end of botheration and cost."

"You may not die here, on a door-step!"

"Pooh! why not? Is there any eleventh commandment against dying on door-steps? Or an act of Parliament? Is it against the law of God or the land? Where can a poor gentleman die better than on a nobleman's door-step, with the moon and the stars above him?"

This was said in a still fainter voice, and with several pauses, arising from the speaker's difficulty of breathing.

"A cab will pass in a minute," said Albert, soothingly, "and then I'll take you off to a better place."

"No, no, no, for Heaven's sake, don't!" the Bohemian responded, vehemently, with a mockery of terror in his voice and countenance. "Don't take me to a hospital. Don't let me die in a hospital. To expire on a nobleman's door-step is dramatic, but to die in a hospital, like a pauper and blackguard, would be so deuced low. If I died in a hospital, I should never be able to hold my head up in the next world!"

"I won't take you to a hospital," Albert promised, "but to my own chambers, which are near at hand."

"Worse and worse!" gasped Mr. Otway. "Then I should die in the odor of respectability on a spring-sofa or a feather-bed. Do, my dear sir, let me die the death of a Bohemian gentleman!"

As he spoke thus mockingly, with the purpose of showing a true Bohemian's spirit to the last, Mr. Otway was seized with another and still sharper spasm of the malady which had brought Albert to his side.

"O Heaven! help me! the heart, the heart! it will snap!" he cried, as he put his left hand to his heart, and with his right clutched Albert's coat-collar, as though he wished to rend it from its wearer. "This is death!—it must be death!"

But the poor fellow's end had not yet come.

The paroxysm passed off; and, when the sufferer had ceased to grasp his companion convulsively, and had escaped again the peril of immediate suffocation, a policeman on his beat round the square stopped before the lowest of the door-steps and asked what was the matter.

"My friend is ill; he has had a violent seizure—a fit. See, my good fellow, if you can't find a cab for us."

Before the constable could express his willingness to obey the order, a cab lumbered round the nearest corner and drew up before the party. The carriage fortunately was empty, and the driver looking out for a fare.

"Well," Mr. Otway assented, reluctantly, "since you will have me, I will go with you. But, mind you, I have warned you that you are letting yourself in for the deuce and all of trouble."

With the help of the policeman, Albert lifted

the Bohemian into the cab, which three minutes later deposited the two passengers at the door of 35 Manchester Street.

The house was closed for the night. Mrs. Garrett, the landlady, and her servants were in bed and sound asleep. But Albert had his latch-key, and without rousing any of the sleepers managed to convey his guest to his suite of rooms on the first floor.

Having placed him on the sofa of the large drawing-room, and lighted the gas, Albert was about to inquire how the patient found himself, when the latter asked sharply for laudanum and brandy.

"I must run out for them," was Albert's reply.

"Go, then,—quick! A pint of laudanum, and a bottle of cognac. They may bring me round."

"Shall I call some one to sit up with you while I am absent?"

"No, no; I shall do by myself here as well as when I was on the door-step. Only do be quick!"

Complying with the request, Albert quitted the house immediately, and ran off to the nearest tavern. Having bought the brandy, he hastened, with the bottle under his arm, to a druggist's shop, not more than three hundred yards distant from Manchester Street. At the present date a druggist would decline to serve a perfect stranger with a pint of laudanum, and, if he were roused in the middle of the night to execute so unusual an order from any non-medical person, he would probably accompany his refusal with a few strong expressions of resentment at the untimely visitor. But five-and-twenty years ago the deadliest poisons were bought as easily as plum-buns in our thoroughfares; and, like a similar tradesman immortalized by Shakspeare, the apothecary to whom Albert had recourse was so urgently in need of a few shillings that he was in no mood to reject a customer on conscientious grounds.

"A pint?" said the tradesman, when, after doffing his night-cap, and covering his shirt with a shop-coat, he had opened his place of business. "I don't think I have as much as that left in the bottle. You don't want so much to-night, unless you are used to it."

"I don't require it for myself."

"Ah! I thought you did not look like an opium-drinker. I see—you want it for a friend?"

"Yes, for a friend who has been suddenly taken ill. He sent me out for laudanum and brandy. Do make haste; he is in a bad way."

"Well, sir, here is best part of a pint. Only mind, sir, the stuff is poisonous. Don't overdose the gentleman, or you may get into trouble."

As he gave these words of caution, the druggist completed the operation of pouring the dark fluid from his shop bottle in a vessel, which he forthwith corked, wrapped in paper, and gave to Albert, without having troubled himself to affix to it any admonitory label.

Having paid the tradesman about three times the proper price of the tincture, Albert rushed out of the shop, and returned at his fullest speed to 35 Manchester Street, where he found Otway still lying on the sofa, and in no apparently worse condition.

In reply to a hasty question, the Bohemian said that he was easier, and hoped a good dose of his customary medicine would enable him to fall asleep.

"I know nothing about laudanum," said Albert. "Don't let me give you too much, there's a good fellow."

"The druggist has been frightening you?" rejoined Otway, with a smile on his thin, pallid face.

"He gave me a word or two of caution."

"Very good of him."

"You told me to get a pint. Do you want it all at once?"

"Not quite all. I am a provident fellow, and ordered a stock that will answer my wants for several days. Give me three large table-spoonfuls of the laudanum, and two large wine-glassfuls of brandy. Put them in a tumbler with a little cold water—about as much water as there is brandy in the mixture!"

"You are sure you are not asking for too much?"

"Quite sure. I can drink laudanum like Coleridge and De Quincey, each of whom could get through a black bottle of it in a day. A dose which would kill two or three ordinary men outright only sends me to sleep."

On this assurance Albert mixed the drinks in the stated proportions, and then brought the tumbler to his singular guest.

"Good! good! good!" ejaculated the sick man, when he had drunk off the nauseous compound at a single draught.

Having uttered these expressions of satisfaction, he fell back again on the high pillow of his sofa, and, raising his arms, put both his hands on the top of his head. Not another word did he speak, though his eyes remained open for the next ten minutes.

As the room was sufficiently lighted, Albert now had an opportunity of scrutinizing the visage and dress of the man who had been so strangely put into his keeping. Both exhibited indications of distress and degradation. The delicate features of the once beautiful face were painfully thin, and furrowed with marks equally expressive of dissipation, sickness, and long endurance of hardships. The young man's light beard and red whiskers were untrimmed and dirty; and while it was obvious that he did not usually wear mustaches, it was also apparent that no razor had touched his lips for a week or ten days. Long unkempt tresses of auburn hair were matted and knotted on either side of a head which, at its crown, was already noticeable for baldness, although its owner was still only in his thirtieth year. As for his dress—a sadly dilapidated and threadbare walking costume—it was chiefly remarkable for dirt and seediness.

The gentleman's shirt-collar and shirt-front proved him to be no liberal patron of washer-women; and his shepherd's-plaid trowsers were very ragged at the parts which came in contact with a pair of Blücher shoes. And yet, in spite of dirt, and tatters, and squalid neglect, he had nothing of "the rough" or "the criminal" in his appearance. On the contrary, his brow, and profile, and facial air, notwithstanding all their disfigurements, were suggestive of culture and refinement. At the best, he was a gentleman far gone in consumption and penury. At the worst, he was that most forlorn and melancholy of all dismal creatures—a young Bohemian grievously out of luck and health.

Having composed himself for slumber, Mr. Otway would have fallen into unconsciousness on the sofa, and so found a far more luxurious sleeping-place than any couch he had occupied for many a week, had not Albert, rousing him somewhat roughly, insisted on playing the part of his valet, and putting him into the only bed of the backward drawing-room.

For a minute the dreamy and slumberous gentleman showed a disinclination to comply with his entertainer's wish on this point. He did not speak, but he drew back from the door of the inner chamber, like a horse refusing to be led across a narrow bridge or coaxed into a railway horse-box. His silence left it uncertain why he disapproved of his host's purpose. Perhaps he divined that Albert would be compelled to pass the night on the sofa or an easy-chair, if he surrendered his only bed to a slight acquaintance. Perhaps the white draperies and perfect cleanliness of the sleeping-room frightened the poor fellow, who had not seen a decently furnished bed-chamber for twelve months. Anyhow, his resistance was not stubborn. Yielding himself speechlessly to his fate, he allowed himself to be stripped of his almost beggarly apparel, and to be enveloped in a night-shirt of snowy whiteness, before he was put, like a sick soldier lifted by a strong hospital orderly, into the pure and comfortable bed.

"Poor devil!" Albert muttered to himself, when he had closed the bedroom door on his tranquilly sleeping guest, and had returned to his sitting-room. "Only eight years since he was as bright, comely, joyous a madcap as could be found in Heidelberg. He was sowing his wild oats then. And they have yielded a crop of noxious weeds and poisonous plants—a crop of bitter memories and agonizing remorse—which he must reap and garner until death puts an end to the cruel labor. Poor wretch! he has fallen beyond redemption! He must die! Oh, those wild oats!"

Thus meditating, Albert drew out from a corner of his room a bear's skin and a pile of thick woolen railway-rugs. Having covered the sofa with the rugs, he laid himself upon them, and drew over his body the bear's skin. Sleep was not long in coming to the young man when he had thus made his arrangements for the night; and, as he slid through drowsiness into

dreaminess that ended in profound slumber, he thought, "But why should Otway die altogether? why should his name perish? Why may it not live in me, and shine with honor given it by my exertions?"

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW NAME IS IMPOSED ON THE BOHEMIAN.

THOUGH Albert's night was one of unbroken slumber, it was not one of many hours. By seven o'clock he was awake and stirring. He had risen from his sofa, and ascertained that his guest was still sleeping tranquilly, when the maid-servant who waited on him entered the drawing-room to put it in order for the day. Her surprise at finding him in the sitting-room was not diminished when he told her where he had rested, and cautioned her to make as little noise as possible, lest she should disturb the gentleman who occupied the bed in the adjoining room. But the young woman's astonishment did not embarrass the lodger, who told her to let him have his breakfast at the usual hour, and, also, to inform her mistress that he would speak with her in her private parlor when she had breakfasted.

Leaving Hannah to enjoy her surprise and do her work, Albert then left the house for an hour. He had a bath at the swimming-school in the New Road, and visited a barber's shop within a stone's throw of the same thoroughfare. When his hair had been dressed at this establishment, he engaged one of its attendants to call at 35 Manchester Street, at ten o'clock, to render the services of his profession to a sick gentleman. On his way back to his lodgings he called at the house of Dr. Becher, in Hinde Street, and was so fortunate as to find that famous physician at home, and already accessible to patients. Having heard Albert's story of his previous night's adventure, Dr. Becher promised to call on his visitor's sick friend at twelve o'clock.

Albert's next business was to inform Mrs. Garrett of the circumstances which had brought another inmate to her house. A strictly practical personage, the lodging-house keeper had a welcome for the lodger for whose entertainment Albert bound himself to pay, and for whose general respectability he offered to be sponsor. Mrs. Garrett had a small bedroom at the service of either Mr. Wright or his friend; or she could put up a second bed in the dressing-room in the rear of Mr. Wright's chamber. Having thus expressed her willingness to oblige Mr. Wright, Mrs. Garrett suggested that he should gratify her curiosity by stating his friend's name, a demand for which Albert, albeit naturally and habitually truthful, was prepared with a harmless fiction.

"The gentleman's name is Guerdon," Mr. Wright answered, coolly.

"Guerdon? Bless us!" returned the land-

lady. "Is he related to the Hammerhampton forger who committed suicide last June?"

"I don't know much of the gentleman's family, Mrs. Garrett," Albert answered, cautiously; "though some years since I knew him intimately. You need not be afraid to harbor him; though his name is Guerdon, I am afraid he won't trouble us long."

"Poor gentleman!" observed Mrs. Garrett, who saw the indiscreetness of the speech, which she would fain have retracted. "And very likely he's nothing in blood to the gentleman who died so unfortunate in the Great Yard. Guerdon is a common name enough. Guerdons are as plentiful as peas in a bushel. An't they, sir?"

Albert replied warily,

"I dare say they are as plentiful as peas in some bushels."

Bidding Mrs. Garrett good-bye for the present, Albert went up stairs, breakfasted leisurely, and in due course entered his guest's sleeping-room with a tray in his hand. The tray had been fitly provided by Hannah with a white napkin, a new-laid egg, a plate of thin-nish bread-and-butter, a large basin of excellent tea, and sundry additaments suitable for an invalid's breakfast.

Having slept off the effects of the narcotic and his previous night's exhaustion, Mr. Otway was in the full possession of his weakened faculties, when Albert appeared before him with the materials for his breakfast. During the previous half-hour the Bohemian had surveyed the appointments of his comfortable quarters, and recalled several of the incidents to which he was immediately indebted for his hospitable entertainment. He could remember how he had passed the evening which closed with his seizure in Portman Square. He could recall the successive attacks of spasm of the heart. And he knew that he had been taken from the door-step of an aristocratic mansion, into a parlor of a well-furnished house, by some compassionate spectator of his agonies. He had, also, a vague recollection of the eagerness with which he had called for brandy and laudanum, and of the relief which they had afforded him. But, having failed to identify Albert either in the square or in the lodgings, he was still wondering who his rescuer could be, when Albert bade him good-morning.

"Why, it is Guerdon," the Bohemian observed, composedly, when he had raised himself in bed, and recognized his host.

"I was Guerdon—you are right so far; I was Guerdon when I saw you last at Rome."

"Eh, at Rome? To be sure, at Rome. In Mainwaring's studio. Did you see his 'Carnival' in the last Academy? It was deuced good. So you have changed your name? Who are you now?"

"Albert Wright, and very much at your service."

"Umph! Wright? A very good *alias*, neither too common nor too distinguished;

more gentlemanly than Smith, Brown, Jones, or Robinson, and less striking than Bohun, Darcy, or Temple. A very good choice," the Bohemian observed, smiling as he criticised the name.

"It will answer my purpose for the present. Anyhow, think of me as Albert Wright."

"And forget that you were ever Albert Guerdon?"

"If you can."

"For civility's sake, I can do a great deal; and I owe you something more than civility, Albert Wright. By-the-way, though, you may not have changed your name to escape the importunities of Jew money-lenders and Christian tradesmen. Perhaps you have come into a fortune as well as a new name?"

"No," Albert answered, gravely, "I lost my fortune before I became Albert Wright." After a pause, he added, "I ceased to be Guerdon, to escape infamy. You know my story?"

"To be sure—I remember it now. I heard how the old man went to smash, and all the rest of it."

"Then I need not pain myself by telling you more precisely why I changed my name. It is enough to say that I am Wright, in order that I may not be taken for my father's son."

"Quite enough. I take the world as I find it, my dear boy—and a devilish bad world it is! Thank Heaven, I shall soon be out of it! But, though life has treated me scurvily, it has never driven me to surrender my rightful name. I am Reginald Albert Otway still."

"Pardon me," Albert returned, with a smile, "you are Albert Guerdon."

"The deuce I am! How has that come about?"

"I have just told my landlady that you are Mr. Guerdon, and, as you owe me civility, you can't give me a lie. As long as you are my guest, you are Mr. Guerdon. When you re-enter the world, you can be Mr. Otway again."

Far from being offended, the Bohemian was prodigiously amused by the liberty which had been taken with his personal story. There are only two courses open to a man in his position. As he could not be angry, he was constrained to be merry at his misdescription. Having laughed cheerily, he observed,

"Then I am to carry the appellation which is too disgraceful for Mr. Albert Wright? My dear Wright, I have accepted the name and the infamy, and don't find them burdensome."

"No, you have only taken the name, which is a good enough name for any man who is not John Guerdon's son. The infamy, which is my inheritance, I retain—though I mean to hide it away, and escape its consequences."

"If you escape them, you get quit of the infamy. Shame consists wholly in the consequences of something shameful. And, pooh! what is social disgrace? The gossip of folk whom you neither hear nor care for." After a pause, the Bohemian added, "But, Mr. Wright,

I don't quite see your little game. What are you after?"

"Giving you your breakfast. Here, take your tea and bread-and-butter. When you have finished them, a gentleman, holding office in a hair-dresser's shop, will have arrived to trim your beard and brush your hair, and put you into shape. At twelve o'clock the famous Dr. Becher will come to feel your pulse. In the afternoon we will dine off a roast chicken, and chat about old times. You see, I have settled every thing."

"Thank you—I like to be done for. I could never manage to do for myself."

In the disastrous and slang sense of the words, Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon, had managed to "do for himself" completely. But he was speaking literally and truthfully of his chief incapacity. He was not of the stuff and spirit needful for men who must push their way in the world, or be content with "monkey's allowance." So long as he had a good income for a youngster, and was "done for," by paternal generosity, he lived happily enough among the students of foreign universities and the junior artists of continental galleries. But when his father died suddenly, and left him without a penny, he went quickly to grief. Returning from Italy to his native country, he worked fitfully and irresolutely at the only profession in which he was qualified to earn a crust; but, though he was not deficient in artistic perception and cleverness, he had not the indefatigable zeal and perseverance by which youthful painters sometimes do justice to their capacities, and conquer adversity. In the domain of the fine arts, he did several things a little; nothing thoroughly. He painted in oils a little, he washed in water-colors a little, he etched a little, he modeled in clay a little. He conceived fine pictures, made rough sketches for them, and left his designs for other aspirants to carry out profitably. He sent in unfinished pictures to the Academy, where they were rejected because they were unfinished. How he fared, it is needless to describe minutely to the haunter of studios, or even to the general reader. His fate was the universal fate of moneyless young men, who, without energy and strong purpose, loiter listlessly into a vocation where nothing can be achieved without strenuous effort. He could see how things ought to be done, but lacked the robustness and determination requisite for doing them; so he earned shillings instead of guineas, and, consoling himself for his ill fortune with brandy and opium, lost all nerve and confidence in himself.

In doing for him benevolence never failed to produce a certain amount of desirable, though transient, results. Every attempt to put him on his legs and set him going was successful up to the point when he tottered and fell again, like a top when its momentum is exhausted. The journeyman barber, who helped him through a warm bath in Albert's dressing-room,

and then dressed his hair, was delighted with the change wrought in the sick gentleman's appearance by soap and water, hair-wash and brilliantine, razor and scissors. Albert also was agreeably surprised by the improvement in his *protégé*, who looked "another man" when he had been washed, and clipped, and shampooed, and brilliantined into outward gentlemanliness.

This change for the better had been scarcely accomplished, when Dr. Becher appeared at the invalid's bedside. Ten minutes' use of the stethoscope and talk with his patient were enough to satisfy the physician of the hopelessness of the invalid's condition.

On re-entering the drawing-room, where Albert was awaiting the conclusion of the medical inquiry, the physician, having closed the door behind him, spoke without reserve of the mortal character of Mr. Guerdon's ailments.

"It is my duty to tell you, Mr. Wright, that your friend's case is hopeless," said the doctor.

Feeling no sorrow at the announcement, Albert feigned none. On the contrary, experiencing some satisfaction at the intelligence, he allowed the feeling to be slightly apparent in his countenance.

"How long will he live?" Mr. Wright inquired.

"Not many weeks at the utmost. The probabilities," answered the physician, "are that he will be dead in a month. He may, of course, die any day from spasm of the heart. But, should he not die sooner of heart disease, he will sink before the end of the year under another incurable malady, from which he is suffering."

"When will you see him again, Dr. Becher?"

"I can do him no good."

"Still, I should wish him to be under your charge."

"Hm! I will write him a prescription for a draught that may afford him relief on the recurrence of the heart spasms, and another for a mixture which he may take regularly. At any moment of emergency you can send in for me. Many visits from me would do him no good, and only take from you guineas which, as you are a young man, you can perhaps ill afford."

Seeing the kindly motive which occasioned the doctor's reluctance to make the invalid daily visits, Albert assured the considerate physician that he need not have any regard for a poverty which was only comparative, and by no means urgent.

"Well, that being so," returned the doctor, with a somewhat eccentric bluntness, "I'll drop in once or twice a week. But don't put a guinea into my hand each time I come. Let my fees run up, and pay me when it is all over with the poor fellow."

The fact is, the physician had made up his mind to take no fees for attendance on the case with which Mr. Wright appeared to have burdened himself from pure benevolence. A few hours earlier, in describing the circumstances under which he encountered his old acquaint-

ance in Portman Square, Albert had unintentionally revealed the sick man's indigence.

When Dr. Becher had written his prescriptions, and taken his departure, Albert ordered an early dinner to be on the table by five o'clock, and then, having requested Mrs. Garrett to provide her new lodger with a biscuit and a glass of sherry for luncheon, he went out, to read the newspapers at a cheap coffee-shop in the neighborhood of Leicester Square.

On his return to Manchester Street, shortly, before the time appointed for dinner, Mr. Wright found his guest clothed, and lying on the sofa.

"You scarcely know me, now that I look so gentlemanly and civilized," said the Bohemian, who had donned a suit of decent clothes which Albert had placed at his disposal, in lieu of the ragged habiliments mentioned in the last chapter. "'Pon my honor, I hardly knew myself when I saw my semblance in the looking-glass. This good suit and clean shirt have shown me that I can still appreciate the advantages of cleanliness and respectability. The coat and trowsers would fit me well enough if I were only as stout as I used to be. We are much of a height."

"Ah, Guerdon," returned Mr. Wright, "and I remember when you were stouter than I. What can I do to fatten you?"

"Ring for dinner. I have an appetite. Let us see, we are to have a roast chicken—rather a small dinner, Mr. Wright, for two men."

Albert was agreeably relieved by his friend's lightness of manner and speech, and also by the ease with which he alluded to benefits for which no man, unless he is Bohemian, likes to be indebted to another. The host would have been not a little embarrassed, had the guest exhibited any burdensome sense of his obligations to a man with whom he had never been very intimate. But Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon, had received similar favors too often to be oppressed by them. Bohemians are apt to regard themselves as having a moral title to the material possessions of their more fortunate, especially of their *respectably* prosperous friends. And being a Bohemian, Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon, was far more disposed to congratulate himself on having fallen into hands that would "do for him" than to think about the humiliation of "being done for." He was elated by the goodness of the raiment which had been lent to him, and by the comfort (not to say luxury) of the quarters into which he had been drawn from houseless vagabondage. His gray eyes sparkled with animation when he saw that the "roast chicken" meant a pair of fowls. And they overflowed with delight when Mrs. Garrett placed a tall-necked bottle of Rhenish wine on the table.

At dinner the Bohemian ate heartily, not to say wolfishly; and, though he had taken something more than his rightful share of the primrose-colored wine, he agreed with Albert in thinking that they might as well have a bottle of Saint Emilion with their cigarettes.

And as they drank their red wine and puffed away at their tiny sticks of papered tobacco, the young men talked cheerily of old times, and places and faces they had known on the Rhine and the Neckar—of friends, also, whom they had known at Antwerp, and Venice, and Rome.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

IN past years their intercourse had never been closer than mere acquaintanceship; but in Manchester Street Mr. Wright and Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon, became intimate. Albert conceived a compassionate tenderness for the poor neer-do-weel, whom he was protecting through the valley of the shadow of death. He confided to him secrets which he would have withheld from him, had it not been certain that in a few weeks death would deprive the artist of the power to reveal them in careless gossip. The moral infirmities, which would have roused Albert's repugnance to a delinquent not lying under the doom of death, only increased his pity and charitable sympathy for his *protégé*. On the other hand, Otway, *alias* Guerdon, was profoundly touched by the kindness of the man who befriended him, outcast though he was to the rest of the world. Combining the shamelessness and selfishness of his fallen kind with their capability of transient gratitude, the Bohemian's nature was stirred by delicacy which he could still appreciate, and by generosity which he could not repay. More than once, during the first fortnight of his residence in Mrs. Garrett's lodging-house, the poor fellow, obeying impulses that may have been partly due to furtive nips of cognac, lamented his inability to show fully, by word or act, his sense of his benefactor's goodness.

It was a relief to Albert, after his long period of loneliness and sorrowful musing, to be able to tell the story of his griefs to a willing listener; and to his chum's lively satisfaction he frankly confessed that the agreeable consequences of their companionship were equally distributed between them. It was a strange friendship this, for which the one was indebted to poverty, and the other to shame and sorrow. As the sequel will show, it was also an alliance in which the one friend was less completely frank than the other. But while Albert submitted his whole breast and life to his friend's observation, he had no suspicion that he was treated with a less perfect confidence. Reserve is seldom the failing of a Bohemian toward those who win his affection without causing him to fear their disapprobation. And the artist spoke so frankly on a score of matters, respecting which a nice self-respect would have made him silent, that it would have been strange had Albert suspected him of studiously concealing a single fact of his personal history. The time came when Albert regretted that he had

not been more suspicious of the gentleman's apparent ingenuousness. In fairness, however, to the Bohemian, let it be here recorded that there was only one matter on which he failed in perfect candor to his patron.

On one point Albert was not mistaken in his favorable opinion of his friend. The Bohemian was no rogue; he had ruined his health by dissipation, but he had never impoverished tradesmen by dishonest practices. He had sponged on his friends, but he had never defrauded any one of money or money's worth. He had often slept on the bare ground under public arches or on the steps of open staircases, but he had never sneaked away from lodgings without paying their keepers for entertaining him. He had never taken bite nor sup without paying for it, unless it had been given to him. No tradesmen in all London could accost him in the streets, and say justly, "Scoundrel, pay me what thou owest!" With money in his pocket, he had lived with the improvidence and license of his class; but when his purse had failed, he had always starved uncomplainingly from cold and hunger, like an honest man. "And," he observed gayly to the one hearer of his personal confessions, "I can assure you from experience that extreme hunger is no justification for theft. The degree of hunger which we call appetite is a pleasurable inconvenience to those who have the means of satisfying it. The sharp hunger of a person who has fasted several hours after his usual feeding time is, no doubt, a grievous pain, almost amounting to torture. But when abstinence from nutriment has been persisted in for twenty-four hours, hunger is productive of positively agreeable sensations. As soon as the stomach begins to prey upon itself, its gnawing bite occasions nervous results which are in the highest degree delightful." In my time, my dear boy, I have been an absinthe drinker, as well as an involuntary abstainer from food; and, believe me, hunger on the second day is very much like absinthe in its effect on the stomach and nervous system. A man who steals a loaf to allay the pangs of famine on the second day is a fool as well as a rogue. He does not know when he is well off."

"Still, in your extreme hunger," suggested Albert, "you never refused nutriment that was offered to you?"

"I took it, so that I might live to enjoy hunger on a future occasion."

"A too long persistence in the pleasure which you describe so forcibly would have disagreeable results."

"At least, results from which human nature shrinks with unaccountable repugnance."

The two men had lived together for a fortnight in Manchester Street—Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon, never leaving the house, and rapidly growing weaker, without losing any thing of his constitutional cheerfulness, when Albert asked his friend seriously whether his anticipations of death, which could not be far distant, did

not make him wish to have any conversation with a Protestant clergyman or Catholic priest.

"No, no," he answered, "I don't wish 'the cloth' to come near me till I am dead."

"Your mind is quite made up on that point?"

"Quite. I am a nominal member of the Church of England, but I don't wish to see any of her clergy."

"Then I will say no more on the subject."

"Thank you. But, of course, I wish to be decently buried."

"Where?"

"Any London cemetery will do."

"Would you prefer London to the country?"

To which inquiry the Bohemian responded, eagerly,

"Oh! I should prefer the country; but it would cost you, my dear boy, such an inordinate lot of trouble and money to lay me among the violets and primroses. You will have done nobly by me when you place me in something better than a pauper's grave, in a London graveyard. Why not Highgate? Would it be too expensive?"

After a moment's silence, Albert replied, with tender seriousness,

"You shall have your wish, Otway, and be buried in the country. But say, would you rather be buried in a church-yard, or under the chancel stones of a rural church? I know a church—Ewebridge, in Boringdonshire—where I can, without much trouble or cost, place you either in the building itself, or in as lovely a church-yard as can be found in the whole county."

"Describe them to me—the church-yard first, and then the church."

Complying with the request, Albert, in brief, pictorial sentences, did equal justice to the exterior and interior of his old parish church. He described the antique tower, the curiously delicate tracery of the church windows; the two huge yews on either side of the opening of the long porch; the elms and sloping turf of the precinct; and the rivulet winding round the fence of the Lord's acre. Then he led his vividly interested listener into the sacred building, and bade him admire the Norman arches and rood-loft, the harmonious proportions of the structure, the richness of the roof, and the ingenious carving of the old benches. He set forth the costume and characteristics of the habitual frequenters of the sacred building, and his own pleasant memories of the music of its organ and choir.

"Let me lie in the church," implored the Bohemian, when he had surveyed the interior of the temple. "I would rather moulder in the silent vault than in the wet ground outside. Put me in the building, where prayers will be said over me every Sunday. But can you really manage it?"

"The vault in which you shall be placed," answered Albert, revealing a scheme which had been taking shape in his brain during the last fourteen days, "is my own family vault. And,

if you do not order otherwise, your coffin shall bear on its lid a plate declaring that it contains the body of Albert Guerdon, only son of John Guerdon, formerly of Earl's Court."

The Bohemian smiled.

"If you wish to preserve your identity in the grave," said Albert, who misconstrued the smile as an indication of Otway's reluctance to consent to the misdescription, "say so, and you shall be interred under your own name. Of course, you see how my plan would accomplish my purpose of persuading Lottie of my death."

"Of course. And in me, my dear Wright, you have a willing accomplice. Make what use you like of yours very sincerely, R. A. O.—*alias* Albert Guerdon."

"When Albert Guerdon's death has been announced in the London and Boringdonshire papers, and when Albert Guerdon has been actually interred in the Guerdon vault of Ewebridge church-yard, Lottie will be satisfied that I am dead."

"She won't question the fact."

"I will so manage the matter that she shall not have a suspicion of the imposture. You shall write a letter to Lady Darling, ready for me to post to Arleigh, announcing in due course that I have died, and that on my death-bed I requested you, immediately on my decease, to announce the fact to her, and also to transmit my farewell letter to Miss Darling. These two letters I shall post at the proper time."

"Good."

"You shall also, in the character of my executor, write a letter to Mr. Fairbank, the rector of Ewebridge, announcing my death, and requesting him to inter me in the Guerdon vault. Of course you will state your intention to accompany your friend's coffin to Boringdonshire, and witness its sepulture. One or two spaces for dates must be left vacant in these letters for me to fill in after your death, with an imitation of your handwriting. It won't be difficult for me to do that. But it will be necessary for you to write the body of the letters to Lady Darling and Mr. Fairbank, for they know my handwriting, though they would not detect a word or two of it, when inserted with disguise in letters of your penmanship."

The Bohemian was delighted.

He shook his head, laughed gleefully, and, in the exuberance of his pleasure at the fraudulent arrangements for his own funeral, snapped the fingers of his right hand, so that they rattled like castanets.

"But how am I to sign the letters? What name is your executor to bear? I may not finish the letters with the name that I shall bear in the grave. The executor and letter-writer must be Mr. Wright?"

"No," promptly answered Albert, who had anticipated every difficulty; "you must sign Reginald Albert Otway. When I have buried you under my own name, I mean to live out my life under your name."

The Bohemian's face flushed suddenly with pride and joy at this announcement.

"Please Fortune, then," he ejaculated, vehemently, "the old name shall shine out again with honor! I love the old name well enough to hope that it may fare well in your keeping. Aha! my father's ghost shall exult in the honor paid to his son's name."

"The name shall not come to dishonor through me," Albert responded, seriously.

"I know it, my dear boy—I know it!" the other replied, with extraordinary emotion.

The two men held this conversation toward the close of the second week of November, in an evening, shortly after their dinner, while they were smoking cigarettes over their customary bottle of claret; and, in order that they should lose no time in executing the preliminary steps for their joint enterprise, Albert went to his desk, opened it, and placed upon it a quire of black-edged note-paper, and a packet of envelopes with deep black borders.

"Now, Guerdon," he said to the Bohemian, "sit down at that desk, and write as I tell you to Lady Darling."

When Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon, had seated himself at the desk, Albert said,

"First put at the head of your sheet of paper, '35 Manchester Street, Manchester Square, London.'"

"Good; I have done so."

"Now put under London, '— inst., 184—.' To complete the date I shall then have only to put in the numeral or numerals marking the day of the month."

"I have done that. Go on."

Whereupon Albert dictated to the scribe the following note:

"MY DEAR MADAM,—For the fulfillment of the last injunctions of my dear friend, Albert Guerdon, it devolves on me to inform you that he died yesterday at the above address, of heart disease, complicated with a serious dropsical malady. His illness occasioned him no extraordinary suffering, and his last moments were peaceful. He retained his mental clearness till within two hours of his death, and he expired without a struggle in my arms. I have written, at his instructions, to Mr. Fairbank, the rector of Ewebridge, requesting that he may be buried this day week in the church of that parish.

"Poor Guerdon's last words were utterances of endearment and devotion, spoken in connection with your name and the name of Miss Darling. The inclosed note for Miss Darling was written by Albert a few days before his death, and I now perform a mournful duty in transmitting it to you.

"I have, my dear madam, the honor to remain, yours most sincerely,

"REGINALD ALBERT OTWAY.

"Lady DARLING, Arleigh Manor,
Owleybury, Borlughdonshire."

Having written this letter from dictation, the Bohemian read it to the dictator.

"That will do," the dictator said, in approval of the composition. "Now direct an envelope for the letter."

The scribe obeyed the order.

Of course the envelope was left open, in order that Albert might insert the day of the month.

"And now dip your pen again, and, having headed another sheet of paper in the same way, write to Mr. Fairbank thus:

"REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—My dear friend and fellow-student at Bonn and Heidelberg, Albert Guerdon, died yesterday, of heart disease and dropsy, at the above address, leaving me his executor, and under a promise to place his body in Ewebridge church, in the family vault of the Guerdons. May I beg of your kindness and courtesy to assist me in carrying out my friend's wishes respecting his interment, which I should wish to take place this day week, at any hour at midday that may be most convenient to yourself. Directions will be given to Mr. Coster, the undertaker, of High Street, Owleybury, to meet me at the railway station of that town, with a hearse and one mourning-coach. I have, sir, the honor to remain, yours most sincerely,

"REGINALD ALBERT OTWAY.

"To the Rev. ARTHUR FAIRBANK, M.A.,

"Rectory, Ewebridge, Borlughdonshire."

"Whew!" exclaimed the Bohemian, when he had read out the epistle to his confederate.

"That won't do!"

"What won't do?"

"Does not Mr. Fairbank know you?"

"Quite well."

"Then he will recognize you as Albert Guerdon."

"He will do no such thing," Albert answered, composedly. "Before he sees me, my appearance will have been so changed that even Lottie Darling would not know me. Deem me capable of a trivial indiscretion or oversight, but, in justice to me, my dear fellow, don't imagine that I shall blunder egregiously."

"But he will know your voice?"

"Will he? He will never think my voice the voice of Albert Guerdon, when I say to him, with an appropriately woeful look, 'Our acquaintance, Mr. Fairbank, has been formed under painful—very painful circumstances. Albert Guerdon was dearer to me than a brother. Poor fellow, he will rest calmly in this picturesque church!'"

Trifles did not astonish Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon, but he was astounded by Albert's sudden and perfect assumption of a voice that was firm, melodious, conciliatory, and, at the same time, utterly unlike his ordinary tones of speech.

"Good heavens, Wright," the Bohemian exclaimed, "you startled me out of my senses; at least, almost into a heart spasm."

"Did I? It is easy to surprise simple minds," Albert replied, with an exercise of ventriloquial power which caused his words to sound as though they were spoken by some one under the table.

"What!" cried his companion. "You are a ventriloquist!"

"It appears so," Albert answered, coolly smiling at his comrade's astonishment. After a brief pause, he explained: "Some years since, when I was in the society of a famous ventriloquist at Venice, I accidentally discovered my ventriloquial power, and faculty of imitating voices. I was induced to cultivate the endowments privately; but, as I had no wish to incur enmity as a mimic or exhibit a bodily eccentricity for money, I kept the powers secret from most of my acquaintances. Truth to tell, I am rather ashamed of being a ventriloquist; and as for my mimetic capabilities, I should disdain to play the part of social mountebank and buffoon."

"So no-one in Boringdonshire is aware of your vocal abilities?"

"Not a soul. They are the only secret I had from Lottie Darling. I had a fear that I should sink in her esteem—at least, that she would be pained with a fear for my dignity—if she were to discover me to possess some of the lowest gifts of a low comedian. Fortunately I never surprised her as I have surprised you. If she were to appear in Ewebridge church, I should not be afraid to approach her and speak to her. Disguised as I shall be, and with my mastery of vocal artifices, I could address her without the slightest apprehension that she would recognize me. Now, direct an envelope for your letter to Mr. Fairbank."

When Albert had placed the letters in the secret drawer of his writing-case, and carefully locked that receptacle of important documents, he inquired if his companion were in the humor to continue the exciting and proportionately exhausting conversation.

The answer being in the affirmative, Albert put the invalid at full length on the sofa, and sitting at a distance from, and with his face toward him, re-opened the talk.

"It is quite understood between us? You consent to bear my name in life, and you allow me to put it on your coffin?"

"I do."

"Moreover, you give me your name, to use, abuse, and misuse, as it may seem best to me to do?"

"I do."

"And I may take possession of it at once?"

"Certainly. But you can't securely assume it till you have left this house?"

"You are thinking of Mrs. Garrett, the servants of the house, and Dr. Becher."

"Yes."

"Before I am ten days older they shall all know me as Mr. Otway, and talk to me without the slightest suspicion of my identity with Mr. Wright. I have laid all my plans."

"Let me hear them."

"At the beginning of next week I shall leave you here alone for a week or ten days. On my return I shall be Mr. Otway, with an appearance suitable to the inheritor of your name. Before I leave you, I shall tell Mrs. Garrett that urgent business requires me to proceed immediately to the South of Europe, and that probably I shall not see London again for several years. Our landlady will at the same time be told that your old friend, Mr. Otway, has been summoned from France to live with you in Manchester Street till your death, and that he has promised to accept our invitation within a week or ten days of my departure. I shall give her a written document, authorizing her to give into Mr. Otway's hands my trunks, and whatever property I leave here on departing for Paris."

"You will go to Paris?"

"As soon as I have transacted some needful business in London, I shall cross the Channel and run to Paris, where I know a man who will do every thing that can be accomplished by art to transfigure without disfiguring me. Monsieur Oudarde is a consummate practitioner of the arts of personal disguise."

The Bohemian smiled as he observed, "Perhaps he will so excel himself in your case that I sha'n't know you when you return."

"In spite of your admission into my confidence," Albert replied, firmly, "you will see me so completely altered that for a few moments you will suspect me to be another man."

"Anyhow I shall know you by your eyes," returned Mr. Otway, *alias* Guerdon. "As you are not to be disfigured, they will not be changed."

"Don't be sure of that," was the answer. "Monsieur Oudarde is a worker of miracles. I do not know the limits of his power. It would not astonish me if he were to send me back to you with blue eyes."

"Anyhow," returned the dying man, with a slight manifestation of anxiety, "I hope he will send you back to me at the end of a week. It will be dreary work, dying here alone; and I should like to have you with me at the last."

"Don't be afraid. It may be that the professor won't detain me more than three or four days. Under any circumstances I pledge my word to return to you on the tenth day after my departure. During my absence you will have your books and drawing materials; and you will have Mrs. Garrett and the servants of the house for company. Dr. Becher will see you every day, and every morning will bring you a letter from your friend Otway."

"Yes, yes, but I am getting weaker; and my time must be short."

To allay the apprehension with which he was obviously troubled, Albert told his confederate that, in case his malady indicated a very speedy termination to his sufferings, he could send an urgent summons to his absent friend Otway, who, on receiving the notice, would leave Monsieur Oudarde abruptly, and hasten to London,

although the process of transformation should not be complete.

Assenting reluctantly to a proposal which he could not honorably resist, the Bohemian gave his protector leave to go to Paris. Having done so, he urged him to start promptly, in order that the day of his return should arrive as soon as possible.

"Have you much business to transact first in London?" he inquired, with a querulousness that was discordant to his customary good humor.

"Not much."

"Can't you defer it till your return?"

"No. While Mr. Albert Otway has the appearance of Mr. Albert Guerdon, he must execute whatever affairs it is requisite for him to accomplish before throwing aside forever his old name and character, and starting fresh in life with his new appellation and appearance. Tomorrow he will go into the City as Mr. Albert Guerdon, and instruct a broker to sell out instantly Mr. Albert Guerdon's stock in the Consols. That done, he will make another visit to the City, and instruct a broker, who has never seen him before, to buy stock in certain foreign securities for Mr. Reginald Albert Otway, so that, on his return from Paris, Mr. Otway may neither find difficulty nor run risks in obtaining the income on which he will make his way among the members of the Chancery Bar. This business will require two or three days for its accomplishment. As soon as it is transacted, I shall be off to Paris."

"Your plans are perfect in every detail."

"I should be a fool to act, if they were not."

The irritability and discontent exhibited by the invalid during the latest stage of the foregoing conversation were at the same time the symptoms and aggravating incidents of physical disturbance, that resulted speedily in a paroxysm of his acutest malady: Having assumed a sitting posture, he talked rapidly and petulantly for a couple of minutes; and then, complaining suddenly of faintness, he turned deadly white, and fell back on the sofa. In another minute he cried and groaned under the rending torture of heart spasms, as on the night of his seizure in Portman Square. Albert was alarmed, but apprehension did not deprive him of self-possession. A messenger was sent off instantly to Dr. Becher, who, being at his residence on the arrival of the summons, returned with the servant to Manchester Street, and was by the patient's side before the attack was renewed.

A timely exhibition of a stimulant and anodyne removed all cause for immediate alarm; and after the lapse of an hour the sick man was in bed and asleep.

When he had dismissed Dr. Becher, with thanks for his prompt services, Albert retired to rest with a lively sense of the need for promptness of action. At any day or hour his confederate might be taken from him. Under any circumstances, the Bohemian would not survive many weeks. Since it was desirable that he

should appear under an assumed name and character at the funeral in Ewebridge church, Albert saw that he should not lose any time in re-investing his property, and destroying the physical evidences of his identity with John Guerdon's son.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEREIN ALBERT CHANGES COLOR.

ON the morning of the fifth day after the incidents narrated in the last chapter, Albert might have been seen leaving the Hôtel Voltaire, which stands at the corner of a narrow and quiet thoroughfare within three hundred yards of the Place de la Madeleine, Paris. On turning into the street which the hotel faces, he might have been observed to direct his steps to the Palais Royal, and enter the establishment of Monsieur Oudarde, the once fashionable hairdresser and dealer in perfumery, who was recently shot, after a hasty trial by court-martial, for his participation in the exploits of the Communists.

In equally pleasant and flattering recognition of his professional ability, the Parisian journalists, who described the dignity of his last moments in piquant paragraphs, were pleased to remark that, though he had entered his sixty-fifth year at the time of his execution, he had the appearance of a gracious gentleman in the prime of early manhood. He had, they assured their readers, neither a wrinkle on his brow nor a gray hair on his head.

Five-and-twenty years since, Monsieur Oudarde was at the height of his commercial success and artistic renown. He had competitors in his beautifying industry, who had a larger number of patronesses in the highest ranks of fashion; but no operator on hair and the human complexion in any quarter of the French capital could boast of a stronger connection among the maturer fops and dandies who, having danced in loyal attendance on Louis Philippe, accepted Louis Napoleon and the *coup d'état* with philosophic acquiescence in the course of events. On his rather ignominious retirement from Kensington Gore, Count D'Orsay had no sooner settled in Paris than he called Monsieur Oudarde to his closet and secret counsels; and the artist, on whose skill the fading beau reposed in his declining years, enjoyed the confidence of scores of aging gentlemen, whose wealth and rank caused the supreme hairdresser to assume a tone of sympathetic patronage to the impoverished count. The time had not yet come when the artist received a fee of ten thousand francs for enameling Charles of Brunswick's royal visage, and otherwise garnishing his ducal presence for the state ball at the Tuileries, which the whilom ruler of Brunswick opened with Eugénie the Fair, in the first year of her married life. But already Monsieur Oudarde could name the Duke Charles among his clients, and was continually sending

off *toupées*, and spring stays, and bottles of hair-dye to the big ugly mansion (Brunswick House, New Road, London) which his royal highness occupied till the day that saw him leave England and cross the Channel in a balloon.

Having entered Monsieur Oudarde's superb and curiously furnished shop on the ground-floor, Albert raised his hat courteously to an elegantly attired young lady, who was diverting herself with one of Balzac's fictions, while she sat in attendance on the artist's interests behind a case of ingenious contrivances for the concealment of baldness. In the rear of the lady's chair stood a buhl cabinet, containing a display of sumptuously fitted dressing-boxes.

In addressing this damsel of a piquant countenance and graceful toilet, Albert imparted to his French a slight German accent that did not dispose his fair hearer to regard him with especial favor. But the lady was never deficient in courtesy to her employer's visitors. She smiled with ravishing sweetness and simplicity, when, in answer to the stranger's inquiry, she admitted that Monsieur Oudarde was at that moment in his studio, and accessible to clients. She smiled no less charmingly when she took Albert's card, and sent it up stairs to Monsieur Oudarde by a saucy page, in silver and blue livery, who appeared promptly in answer to the summons of a tinkling hand-bell. The name on the card was Herr Heintsmann; and the corner of the pasteboard contained an address which declared that the visitor's proper city was Berlin. It was Albert's purpose to pass himself off to Monsieur Oudarde as a Prussian.

As the artist fortunately was not engaged at the moment with any of his aristocratic clients, Albert was admitted at once to his chamber of audience and deceptive industry.

Small in the waist, broad in his shoulders, padded in his chest, aquiline in his white nose, piercing in his dark eyes, dazzlingly white in his teeth, and lustrously black in his flowing tresses and drooping mustache, Monsieur Oudarde was a typical and picturesque Frenchman. His morning costume would have beseeemed a youthful millionaire of ducal blood and title. His studio—furnished with stands of books, antique pictures on the walls, and unfinished pictures resting on easels—might have been mistaken for the working-room of a fashionable painter. It did not escape Albert that the appointments of Monsieur Oudarde's chamber comprised several instruments of music, and racks for the orderly preservation of musical publications. Nor did it escape him that, on rising and bowing to his visitor with an air of almost princely condescension, the professor displayed on his right hand a single diamond ring that was worth several thousand francs.

Having taken the chair, which a theatrical movement of Monsieur Oudarde's jeweled hand had declared at his service, Albert went straight to the object of his call. Circumstances had

rendered it desirable that his appearance should be changed, so that his ordinary acquaintance could not recognize him; and, having heard of the professor's skill in the arts of personal disguise, he had resolved to consult him, and, indeed, put himself with unreserved confidence into his transfiguring hands. This was the statement which Albert made to Monsieur Oudarde in French, qualified with a German accent.

Far too polite and prudent a gentleman to exhibit any curiosity as to his visitor's motives for concealment, or even to show any surprise at so comely a gentleman's desire to part company with his good looks, Monsieur Oudarde took the announcement as a mere matter of course and daily experience. To prevent misunderstanding, however, and to secure a proper remuneration for his services, the professor frankly stated that his fees were considerable. Of course Herr Heintsmann was prepared for the announcement. Though by no means a rich man, he would gladly remunerate Monsieur Oudarde's services with proper liberality. The professor intimated that his fee for transfiguring his client and teaching him how to maintain the disguise would be four thousand francs. Neither protesting against the largeness of the demand, nor exhibiting any astonishment at it, Herr Heintsmann merely inquired whether the operator would like to be paid in advance. The suggestion won the artist's approval and perfect confidence in his client's solvency. Of course he declined to profit by the offer. Shrugging his shoulders, and laughing with a pleasant affectation of freedom from sordid acquisitiveness, he declined to listen even for a moment to the proposal of prepayment, though he would certainly have required such payment had not the offer been made so readily. It was ridiculous! the bare thought of such an arrangement was absurd and unendurable! Monsieur Oudarde would do his work, and then take his honorarium in its totality.

"Good!" replied Herr Heintsmann; "that is settled. And now, my dear sir, let me entreat you to be as expeditious as possible. It is of importance that my stay in Paris should not exceed a few days. Transfigure me, and let me quit your charming capital in the course of this week."

"I will be prompt," returned the professor, rising from his lounge chair as he spoke. "But, first, I must study your face, and think. Sit where you are. The light is full upon you. It is impossible that you should be better placed for my observations. For me—I will pace my cabinet and regard you, while I think. Don't talk again till I speak to you."

Having paced the length of his chamber eight or ten times, alternately studying his own boots and his visitor's countenance, Monsieur Oudarde suddenly drew up in front of Albert, and folding his arms over his padded breast, in the style of the great Napoleon, gazed at him intently for two full minutes.

Then the famous transfigurator unfolded his

arms, and tossing his hands lightly upward, exclaimed, "Ah! by my faith, I think I have it! Nothing could be better. It shall be so."

Dropping into a chair opposite Albert's seat, and near a table furnished with crayons and paper for sketching, Monsieur Oudarde began to work away at a piece of paper, using his hands and eyes as though he were taking his visitor's portrait. Having thus handled his crayons for a minute or two, the artist began to chat to his companion while continuing his labor.

"Let me see, Herr Heintsmann; you are greatly handsome and distinguished in your air. Have you made up your mind to a great sacrifice of beauty? Tell me frankly. How ugly may I make you?"

"As ugly as you like, so long as you do not render me absolutely repulsive, or mutilate my face so as to affect my powers of speech. You must leave me with the look of a gentleman."

"No doubt, no doubt. You are ready to sacrifice your beard and mustache?"

"Quite."

"And the color of your tresses?"

"Surely. You may crop them close, and dye them a fiery red."

"Your eyebrows?"

"Do your pleasure with them."

"Your complexion?"

"It is at your disposal."

"May I make you bald, eh? slightly bald?"

"Of course."

"Can you bear pain?"

"I suppose so. I can endure mental pain. I know just nothing of bodily pain."

"So far you are fortunate."

"You think so, Monsieur Oudarde?"

"Surely. It is not always that bodily pain can be removed or mitigated. Toothache may be a far more cruel affliction than the sentimental distress which poets call despair. Neuralgia is worse than grief. The sharpest diseases of the mind yield to their proper remedies—gayety, wine, the dance, music, cookery, the distractions of society. At the worst they are mitigated by such means. But there are tortures of the body for which nature has provided no anodyne. What say you, Herr Heintsmann?"

"I am sorry to hear it, and hope that I may never learn the truth of your words by experience. For the present I am inclined to think you underrate the vehemence and obstinacy of mental torture."

"Aha, you say that in the way of your nation. To exaggerate the griefs of the soul is the fashion of you English."

A look of surprise and annoyance came to Albert's countenance as he saw that his thin disguise had been penetrated by the consummate practitioner of concealments.

"Capital! 'Tis well—exactly what my desire was! I wanted for one minute in your face the look of surprise. And I get it by calling you an Englishman! Ha, ha! pardon me

artifice, in consideration of its object. And it would not have occurred to me to make the egregious imputation if you had not worn clothes of English fashion and manufacture. Doubtless, Herr Heintsmann has been visiting England."

"Precisely so; I came to Paris *viâ* London," returned Albert, rendered uneasy by the shrewdness and detective sagacity of Monsieur Oudarde, whose way of accounting for his allusion to the English, and whose affectation of belief in his client's German nationality, were quite powerless to impose on his startled and henceforth suspicious visitor.

Throughout this by no means fully reported conversation, Monsieur Oudarde had worked away with his chalk-pencils with marvelous dexterity and quickness of execution, so that his performance received its final touch within a minute of Albert's admission that he had come to France from London.

"There, behold it! what say you?" asked the artist, rising and throwing his sketch across the table to Albert, who had no sooner glanced at the drawing than he gave utterance to an exclamation of astonishment.

"Why, I thought you were making a study of my face, Monsieur Oudarde."

"And you were right, Herr Heintsmann."

"But this is no likeness of me."

"It shall be a very good portrait of you before you are five days older, provided you do not think it too hideous. If you wish, I can make another transfiguration of you; but, though I could give you a choice of half a dozen less unsightly disguises, I could not give you one at the same time so complete and so little disfiguring."

"It is capital, and by no means unsightly," rejoined Albert. "I almost think I prefer myself in this style to myself as nature made me."

"Pardon me, sir. You are not now as nature made you. Every civilized human creature's appearance is as much the product of art as of nature. The contour of your beard and mustache, the subtle intelligence of your eyes, the flowing outline of your coiffure, every detail of the costume that covers you completely, are the productions of art. Pah! artificial contrivances! How foolish are the people who profess to deride them, when they have daily recourses to them, and are in fact made up of them! The girlish belle is no less the product of art than the aging duchess whom I provide with youthful color and tresses. She may not need the lily whiteness of powder of pearls, or the roseate tints of manufactured dyes, or locks taken from the heads of peasants; but what would she be without the dress, and ornaments, and style of coiffure, and modish grace of movement, and piquant ways of laughing and speaking, with which art and education—ay, education, that most comprehensive field of artificial arrangements—have provided her? My dear sir, disdain the silly jargon which stigmatizes

as unnatural the contrivances which, because they are the results of art, should rather be admired as the most delicate fruits and finest triumphs of nature. Away with it! But I shall satisfy you, if I make you the fulfillment of my picture."

"Quite," returned Albert, when he had laughed heartily at Monsieur Oudarde's enthusiastic vindication of art as the highest form of nature. Still regarding the picture, he said, "So I am to have a closely cut coiffure of warm auburn hair."

"Surely."

"And be bald—slightly bald?"

"Yes, only slightly."

"The loss of my beard, whiskers, and moustache will change me greatly."

"Very greatly. The removal of the hair from your cheeks, lips, chin, will do more to render you unrecognizable to your old acquaintances than the imposition of the same amount of hair would effect for the same end, if you were now a smooth-cheeked and hairless-faced man."

"Of that I am confident. But what will you do to give me the straight eyebrows of your sketch?"

"Just this. I shall, with a delicate little knife, make two incisions through the superciliary muscles of each eye. The operation will cause you a trivial pain for a minute, and some local uneasiness for a few days; but the result will be that your curved brows will immediately fall, and become two shelving and slightly corrugated lines. It is the most elegant and subtle of all disguises—it is the superciliary transformation. It originated with me; and no surgeon in all Europe can perform it so delicately and securely as I can."

"How long will the cuts take to heal?"

"A few days."

"They will occasion scars?"

"The hair will cover them. And should you, at some future time, wish to resume your present aspect, I can—by a rather more painful and tedious process—cause the muscles to contract, and very nearly recover their present curves."

"I will remember that."

"Do. Bear it in mind. As for your complexion, Herr Heintsmann, instead of its present too pale and bloodless color, I will give your visage and neck one uniform dusky tint, which, though it would ill become a woman, accords with the masculine style. It will not be beautiful; therefore no one will suspect its falseness; for, reasoning from insufficient facts, simple folk suppose that no one modifies his natural color, except with a view to make it accord more exactly with conventional notions of the beautiful. You shall have the complexion of a man whose naturally sanguine skin has been imbrowned by alternate exposure to fierce suns and frigid winds. No one shall for an instant suspect its spuriousness. Trust to me."

"I have perfect confidence in you. When will you begin your operations?"

"This afternoon, if you like. Let me see, where are you staying?"

"At the Hôtel Voltaire."

"For my purpose, you could not be at a better place. The landlord knows me well. Indeed, he is my friend—and near cousin. I often send my clients to reside with him while they are under my hands. A few words from me to him, and your marvelous change in appearance shall cause no observations in the hotel. Thus you will be spared embarrassment. Of course, you have a private sitting-room?"

"I will engage one on my return."

"Do so; and I will call on you at two o'clock."

I shall not be later; for I shall require a good light for my first processes. It will be necessary for you to be a prisoner to your rooms while you are under treatment. And now, my dear sir, good-morning, for the present. I will be with you at two o'clock."

Two full hours of the afternoon did Monsieur Oudarde devote to his client. Great artist though he was, he did not disdain to perform with his own hands necessary services which a mere menial would have rendered more appropriately though not more skillfully. With scissors he clipped off Albert's luxuriant whiskers, beard, and moustache; and then, with all the lowliness and dexterity of a common barber, he applied the razor to the parts which he had deprived of their hairy covering. With scissors, also, he reduced Herr Heintsmann's abundant tresses till they were no longer than the hair of the coiffure now in vogue with modish gentlemen. Into the crown and forward part of the top of his client's head he rubbed a delicate depilatory, which would kill in a few hours the weaker of the hairs, and produce the desired appearance of incipient baldness. He then washed the head and superciliary hair with a bleaching lotion, which would prepare the hair for the reception of the appointed dyes. His next work was to make the incisions in the superciliary muscles, and apply a tight bandage, that passed over the severed muscles and round the head. His final labor was to rub into the skin of Herr Heintsmann's face, forehead, neck, and adjacent parts a slowly staining tincture which, after several applications, would impart to them a brownish-pink, a dusky, sanguine tint.

For five whole days Herr Heintsmann remained a prisoner in his rooms, receiving two visits per day from his zealous transfigurator, who worked to such good effect that, on the conclusion of the treatment, Albert assented to Monsieur Oudarde's assertion that the change was complete for every conceivable purpose of human disguise.

In truth, the transformation was marvelous. And, though it had deprived the young man of some of the most distinctive attractions of his previous appearance, it had not rendered him otherwise than a singularly well-looking personage. The thin and closely cut hair of his head was a bright auburn. The hair of his

straight, shelving brows was a reddish-brown color. The change in the hue of his skin was a decided improvement to his personal aspect. The same may be said of the effect produced by the removal of his silky beard, whiskers, and mustache. His recent sorrow had done something for the extraordinary alteration of his countenance. It is a pure poetic fiction that grief has made black hair white in a single night. The recorded instances of such a change rest in no historical evidence. Had they been true, they would have been more numerous. Had they been real, similar cases would be common in this sad epoch of the human story, when life is more doleful and agonizing than ever it was. But though it does not in a few hours blanch the tresses of its victims, sharp misery has, under nearly every one's observation, given new character and expressions to the faces of the wretched. It accelerates the slow work of time, and, by quickening the natural processes of physical change, gives, in a few months, to the countenance indelible lines and permanent furrows, which, but for the plowing of grief, would not have shown themselves in thrice as many years.

It was so with Albert. Mental distress had caused a rapid disappearance of the fullness which, in his griefless days, had distinguished the superior curves of his otherwise delicately modeled cheeks. Distress had also given an appearance of greater length to his face, and set on either side of his visage a long, deep line, extending from a point slightly below the interior side of each eye almost to the lower jaw. But for biting misery those two lines would not have been apparent till Albert's middle age, and would not have been strikingly characteristic before the last years of his life's middle term. Sorrow, however, had put into his young face these furrows, which, on the removal of his mustache and beard, imparted to his countenance a look of thoughtful self-knowledge and pensive resoluteness, singular in one who was still in years almost a lad.

If his altered countenance repelled the beholder in any degree, the fault was due to a certain indescribable academic severity—an air of ecclesiastical sternness and rigor—that pervaded the face at moments when it was not brightened by the old smile which sorrow, without rendering it less sweet, had qualified with sadness. Anyhow, Monsieur Oudarde had performed his task triumphantly. The disguise was complete, and for every grace or charm which had been obliterated by the operator some other equally attractive characteristic had been substituted.

On the occasion of Monsieur Oudarde's last visit to his client at the *Hôtel Voltaire*, Albert paid the professor his fee gratefully, and received from him several prescriptions and minute orders for the preservation of his false appearance.

At an early hour of the following day Herr Heintsmann started for England. Faithful to

his promise, he lost no time in returning to his friend in Manchester Street, Manchester Square, from whom he had received three letters, and to whom he had written four cautiously-worded epistles during his residence in Paris.

Albert had hoped to reach London during the night after his departure from the French capital, but mischances retarded his progress, and he did not arrive at Mrs. Garrett's lodging-house before the middle of the next day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE BRINK OF THE GRAVE.

In his intercourse with Monsieur Oudarde, Albert had used the voice in which it was his intention to address Mrs. Garrett and Dr. Becher on his return to Manchester Street. During his homeward journey he exercised the same artifice toward fellow-travelers, with whom he conversed freely in the train from Paris to Calais, on the boat from Calais to Dover, and in the railway carriage that conveyed him from the English sea-port to London. The practice having rendered him no less confident in his vocal than his bodily disguise, he encountered Mrs. Garrett's sharp eyes and sound ears without a fear that they would detect his identity with Mr. Albert Wright.

The disguise, which Mrs. Garrett could not penetrate, astonished the Bohemian, who, on joining hands again with his friend, could not refrain from exclamations of surprise at the completeness of the transformation.

As for the Bohemian's bodily condition, it had progressed rapidly toward death during Albert's absence. There had been no recurrence of the spasms of the heart since Albert's departure for France, but the other malady, which had for months been steadily consuming the invalid's vital forces, was already in its last stage. He was already sinking, though it was still possible that he would linger several days. Dr. Becher paid his patient a visit shortly after Albert's arrival in Manchester Street, and the physician (who was no less completely misled than Mrs. Garrett by Albert's transfiguration) told Mr. Otway frankly that Mr. Guerdon could not possibly survive another week.

The end came at an earlier date than the doctor's words indicated. When Albert, on the first morning after his return from France, entered his guest's bedroom at an early hour, he found him lying peacefully in the arms of death. The event occasioned no astonishment to Dr. Becher, who, on inspecting the lifeless form, expressed an opinion that the immediate cause of death was a spasm of the heart, which had instantaneously ended the dead man's sufferings.

Mr. Otway lost no time in giving orders and taking steps for his friend's interment in Ewebridge church.

He sent for an undertaker, of whose proficiency in embalming he had learned before his visit to Paris; and he directed the professor of an art almost extinct in this country to exercise it on the dead man before placing him in a leaden coffin. It had occurred to Albert that a time might come when he would wish to undo his deceptions, and demonstrate that the person buried under the name of Albert Guerdon, in Ewebridge church, had not been the son of John Guerdon. He had, therefore, recourse to costly measures for preserving the lineaments and color of his luckless acquaintance.

Having given adequate instructions to the undertaker, Mr. Otway filled in the two letters, already prepared for transmission to Lady Darling and Mr. Fairbank, and posted them. The London undertaker had been ordered to communicate with his brother in a ghastly vocation, Mr. Coster, of the High Street, Owleybury, and request him to attend, by a stated time, with a hearse and mourning-coach, at the Owleybury railway station. From the registrar of deaths for the London district, which comprises Manchester Street, the embalmer procured the requisite copy of the certificate of Mr. Guerdon's death, in which Dr. Becher had stated precisely the causes of the death. The statement of the dead man's name and age excepted, the certificate contained no falsehood, and, though deceptive, the statement of name can scarcely be said to have been false. The law of England allows people to change their names at their pleasure. Under ordinary circumstances, it is unwise, but it is not illegal for them to do so without giving publicity to their action, and placing it on permanent record. It is allowable for Mr. Jones to call himself Mr. Robinson, at any hour, in any place, and under any conditions of secrecy; and, having become Mr. Robinson, he is, to the law, Mr. Robinson as much as ever he was Mr. Jones. In his life Albert Otway had exchanged names with Albert Guerdon, and in his death he was Mr. Guerdon, while his surviving friend was no less legally Mr. Otway. The mutual exchange of names had been made fairly and deliberately between the two parties. The transaction itself involved no positive falsehood, though it had deception and imposture for its object. It aimed at the achievement of untruth, but it was not itself a lie. The plate of the Bohemian's coffin stated truly what his name was at the time of his decease.

In the envelope of the letter which he posted to Lady Darling, Albert put a note, written in his old handwriting, signed with his old name, sealed with a seal which Lottie had given him in their happiest days, and directed "For Lottie." The brief epistle was of these words:

"DEAR LOTTIE,—When you receive this paper, I shall have been kissed by the grand comforter of all sorrowing mankind. My body will be in the arms of merciful death. Dear-

est, my last thoughts will be of you, my last prayers for you. Yes, darling, when your dim eyes read these lines, I shall be in another world. And you also will be in another world. For this world will to you be another when I shall have left it. Do, I entreat you, think thus of the existence in which I shall soon cease to have a part. It will be a new world to you; live in it bravely, righteously, usefully—ay, and happily. Do not sorrow for me till death. I do not beg of you to forget me. Think of me tenderly; mourn for me as a lost husband; but when time shall have taken the bitterness from your recollections, live out your allotted time on this earth, which will be another earth to you, with more of regard for the living than of fondness for the dead. This is my last petition. Your compliance with it is the one tribute that I implore you to render to the memory of your own Albert. Heaven's grace be with you!

ALBERT GUERDON."

Within forty-eight hours of the Bohemian's death, Mr. Otway was satisfied all his plans for the funeral would be accomplished to his wishes. He had received from Lady Darling a few tenderly worded lines in acknowledgment of his letter to her. Mr. Fairbank had written to assure him every requisite preparation should be made in Ewebridge church at a stated time. Mr. Coster had engaged to meet the executor at the appointed hour, with a hearse and a mourning-coach, at the Owleybury railway station.

During the interval between the death and the funeral, Mr. Otway engaged a new lodging—the drawing-room floor of a large mansion in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury—to which he designed to move his luggage and chattels from Manchester Street, on his return to town from the Boringdonshire church.

The plans for the interment having been laid discreetly, every thing respecting it went to Albert's desire. He alone attended the coffin from London to Owleybury, where he was duly met by Mr. Coster and the gloomy carriages. Though he had neither desired nor expected such a demonstration of respect to his memory, he was not greatly surprised to see, in the rear of the hearse and mourning-coach, a train of some dozen empty carriages, which some of his former acquaintance in Boringdonshire had sent with their servants, to express to the spectators of the funeral their sense of his worth, and their regret for his misfortunes. Social sentiment had so far softened toward John Guerdon, that several of the kindlier folk of the Great Yard and the Owleybury district, without reversing their first reasonable and honest judgment of his conduct, could review the circumstances of his downfall with charitable regard to his partner's evil influence over him. Old friends were beginning to say that, rogue and forger though he was at last, he would have died an honest fool had it not been for Gimlett Scrivener. As for John Guerdon's son, the announcement of

his death in the London papers had relieved him of all the resentments brought upon him by his father's iniquities. When sympathy, it was thought, could no longer comfort, and suspicion could never again torture him, the people of his old neighborhood saw clearly, for the first time, that, of all the persons injured by the failure and misdeeds of Guerdon & Scrivener, he was the victim who had especially deserved pity and generous consideration. It was, therefore, not wonderful that twelve gentlemen of the district found it agreeable to their feelings to send their coaches and cattle to his grave's side.

The coffin was soon lifted from the railway van to the hearse; and, in less than ten minutes after the arrival of the train at Owleybury, Albert was in the mourning-coach on the road to Ewebridge church, with the line of showy equipages in his rear. Sir James Darling's empty chariot was not one of the procession, but as the mourning-coach rolled slowly over the old stone bridge already mentioned in this history, Mr. Otway saw the judge's carriage of state drawn up in the open space before the church-yard. The judge's servants were in black. Beholding these signs of the woe occasioned at Arleigh Manor by his death, Albert conceived it possible that some of the Arleigh family were already in the church. His heart beat, and it well might, as he wondered whether Lottie herself, robed in black, and sitting in tearful agony, at a distant corner of the church, would witness the deceptive ceremony that in five more minutes would be taking place at the yawning mouth of the Guerdon vault.

The position which Albert thus imagined actually occurred.

When she had read and re-read many times Albert's farewell note, with plenteous weeping, and strong convulsions of grief, Lottie, turning to the pale, woe-stricken mother by her side, said, "Oh, mother, he was our own—yours and mine! Now he is quite taken from us."

"He is no less ours now that he is in heaven," returned the sobbing lady. "He was so good—so very good!"

Growing calmer in her grief, as her mother's tears fell faster, Lottie, glancing first at the hand on which she still wore her "engagement ring," and then looking at her other white hand, observed, "He did not live to ring the other hand; but I became his wife in heart when I promised to be his wife, for better or for worse. Mama, he was my husband, and I will mourn for him as for a husband. Do not forbid me, mother."

Forbid her! How could Mary Darling, with her loving nature, check the sacred impulses of her child's affection for the man whom she had surrendered wholly out of filial duty, and sisterly devotion, and meek compliance with his will?

"Lottie, I too will be his mourner. He was my son in heart, and I will grieve for him as for a son."

Lottie and her mother put on their robes of

dismal dark crape; and in her pathetic purpose to declare her heart widowed by Albert's death, Lottie would fain have covered her rich brown hair with light folds of muslin which should signify to beholders that her husband had left her recently in her weakness and loneliness; but from taking this step, which was more likely to provoke censure than sympathy, she was dissuaded by her father, who on all other points consented to her mournful humor.

Partly out of genuine sympathy for sorrow which touched him deeply, and partly out of a feeling that his child's sorrow would more quickly consume itself if it encountered no opposition, Sir James Darling wished Lottie to "take her own way." To gratify her, he assumed the garb of mourning, and put the servants of his house into black. And when Lottie expressed a desire to be present in Ewebridge church at the time of her lover's sepulture, Sir James encouraged her to witness the funeral. The judge was all the more willing to concur in these demonstrations of regard for the dead, because the gossips of Owleybury and Hammerhampton assured him that they would be commended for generosity and good taste throughout the neighborhood, which was now smitten with compunction for having, by coldness and lack of sympathy, if not by active show of contempt, visited the sins of John Guerdon, the father, upon Albert Guerdon, the son.

Had his official duty permitted him to do so, Sir James would have attended the two ladies to Ewebridge, but his presence being required on that day at one of his most distant courts, Lady Darling and Lottie came to the church by themselves.

On reaching the spot at the western end of the Guerdon vault where he had stood a few months earlier as the single mourner at his father's obsequies, Albert found himself in the middle of a gathering of some three hundred persons who had been drawn to the scene by regret for his misfortunes as much as by idle curiosity. The same priest who had officiated at the former funeral read the office for the dead over the coffin, which was now lowered to its resting-place by the same hands that had consigned John Guerdon's chest to the dark cavern. Notwithstanding his strenuous efforts to maintain an aspect of stoical composure, the mourner's agitation was apparent to all who regarded for a moment the writhing lips and trembling figure of the tall, slight, fair-haired man. His distress was favorable to his purpose, for it certainly rendered his countenance more than ever unlike the face which his former self had exhibited to those of the spectators who had known him in his happy days. It was not wonderful that his self-command failed him at this searching ordeal; for, while he played the part of an almost sacrilegious impostor under the gaze of scores of his former acquaintance, his nerve and pulse assured him that Lottie was one of the witnesses of his irreverent masquerade.

When Mr. Fairbank had uttered the final words of the funeral office, Mr. Otway moved nearer to the edge of the open vault, and looked down with sorrowful eyes upon the coffin, whose plate bore Albert Guerdon's name. Having regarded the deceptive inscription for a minute, he was turning away with the intention of withdrawing from the congregation, when he confronted Lady Darling and Lottie, as they approached the tomb, by a way that the respectful sympathy of the by-standers had made for them. Instead of pushing past the ladies, who were thickly veiled and bowed slightly on finding themselves before him, he backed a few paces, so as to facilitate their access to the vault. He paused till he had seen Lottie and her mother each drop a wreath of flowers on the coffin; and then, after exchanging a few hurried sentences of mournful courtesy with Mr. Fairbank, he escaped from the throng and the church, hoping that he should get away from Ewebridge without again encountering the two women.

But in this hope he was disappointed. He had reached the boundary of the sacred precinct, and his mourning-coach, which had drawn up at the church-yard gate, was already being opened to receive him, when he saw Lady Darling and Lottie passing him on the way to their chariot. They also saw him through their veils of dismal crape, and it being obvious, from Lady Darling's movement toward him, that she wished to speak to him, courtesy constrained him to approach and greet the only two persons in the whole world whose scrutiny he feared to encounter.

Summoning all his nervous energy to his aid at this trying moment, Mr. Otway stepped toward them, raised his ponderously decorated hat, bowed stiffly to each of the two gentlewomen, and then took the mother's proffered hand.

"Sir," said Mary Darling, in a scarcely audible voice, "before I go away, let me thank you for your kindness to one who was very dear to me and my child. When I am admitted to heaven, I shall see him again."

While Lady Darling was uttering these tender words to the gentleman, in a tone that could not be heard by the spectators of the interview, all of whom had the good taste to move away from the immediate spot of this strange meeting, he had taken his hand gently from her yielding grasp; and before he could find courage and strength to reply briefly in his feigned voice, the same hand was taken by Lottie. Yes, again they stood together, her hand in his hand, her miserable countenance turned now to the ground, and now for a few brief instants up to his face, while his eyes, penetrating the folds of her thick veil, regarded her scarcely visible features.

"Take my thanks too—mine too," sobbed Lottie. "When you nursed him, you did the work that I should have done. He was my love—my own—my husband. This hand," she added, lowering her face, as she raised Al-

bert's hand to her lips beneath her partly raised veil and kissed it, "is holy to me; it soothed him in his sufferings, and touched him when he was dead."

"Oh! Miss Darling," he responded, slowly, steadily, and solemnly, in one of the sweetest and tenderness of all his vocal disguises, "he did not suffer much. Death had few pains and much comfort for him. In his last days his sorrows lost their blackness and poison of despair. His one trouble toward the end was the fear that you would mourn for him too bitterly and long; and even that trouble grew fainter at the last, for he said, 'When I have found comfort in another world, she will find comfort in this; for, when I have left it, this life will be another life to her.' This was his last long speech."

There was no need for Mr. Otway to continue the supreme effort of speaking in feigned tones of Albert's death, for, Lottie's emotions overpowering her, she wept bitterly and convulsively; while he, placing his left arm round her waist, and sustaining her tremulous figure, carried rather than led her in silence to her mother's carriage.

Having lifted poor Lottie into the chariot, and assisted Lady Darling to her seat by the girl's side, Mr. Otway raised his hat again to the veiled ladies, and then, turning abruptly away, sprang into his own mourning-coach.

When he had thrown himself into a corner of the huge funeral van, and ordered the driver to convey him, with all the quickness permissible by decorum, to the Owleybury railway station, Mr. Otway gasped for breath. His temperament was too sensitive and emotional for him to have escaped acute suffering during the ordeal through which he had just passed. But in a few minutes he had recovered his nerve and self-possession, and could smile grimly as he said to himself, "By heavens! since I could do that without being discovered, why should I not renew my acquaintance with her as Albert Otway, and make her my wife after all?"

Yes, the scene was over, and Lottie had not detected him. But Albert did not know how nearly he had approached recognition and exposure.

"Oh, mother!" Lottie sobbed, as she was being driven homeward, "I could not endure the torture calmly, when, at the close of his words, he repeated the very words of Albert's letter, and, in uttering them, fell into Albert's way of speaking when speaking seriously. It was very natural, of course, and quite accountable, that his voice became like Albert's when he was uttering Albert's last words. But I could not bear it, for it made me feel that Albert himself was speaking to me."

"And so he did, Lottie," urged the mother, "from heaven, through his friend's lips."

"And," continued Lottie, "when he supported me toward the carriage, while the giddiness of fainting seized me, I felt—I felt—oh, mother!"

"Yes, dear?"

Turning her white, lovely face, from which she had raised the black fall of crape, up to her mother's anxious eyes, Lottie explained in words that were visible rather than audible to her companion,

"I felt that Albert's arm was round me; that it was he—he—not his friend—who lifted and hurried me onward over the tumbled ground."

Having made which revelation, with the writhing of her thin lips and the whiteness of her bared teeth rather than with any vocal tones, Lottie gave an hysterical cry, and, sinking back in her mamma's arms, wept violently. She did not speak again during the homeward drive.

Just upon the same time when Lottie was being led up stairs to her private room by her mother and Lady Darling's faithful maid, immediately after her return to Arleigh Manor, Mr. Otway's mourning-coach rolled into the yard of the Owlebury railway station.

Half an hour later the chief mourner at the Bohemian's funeral was in a first-class railway carriage, in the afternoon train for London.

Having attended his own funeral, and dropped a tear into his own grave, Albert was running at express speed up to the vast, resounding, fog-bound capital of the whole world, in which he meant to toil for wealth and social honor.

He slept that night at his old quarters in Manchester Street, Manchester Square. On the morrow he paid his undertaker, sent a check to Dr. Becher, rewarded Mrs. Garrett liberally for her special services to the dead man, and—together with all the chattels of Mrs. Garrett's previous lodger, Albert Wright—moved to his newly taken chambers in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury.

He has buried his former self.

Henceforth he will live a new life under his new name, new form, and new calling.

CHAPTER XIX.

CASUAL ACQUAINTANCE.

A FEW years since there was in England no learned profession that could be more easily entered than the Bar, by any gentleman with a few hundred pounds in his pocket, and a few friends able to speak to his respectability. No man could be placed on the rolls of our chief courts, as a person qualified to practice as an attorney or solicitor, without having first satisfied a board of examiners that he had some knowledge of law. But any reputable male person, satisfactorily introduced to the benchers of one of the four Inns of Court, could, on the payment of certain fees, and after eating a certain number of dinners in the hall of his college, obtain permission to assume the dress and style of a learned counselor, and take briefs from confiding attorneys. He was not required

to pass any examination. It was not necessary that he should have attended the lectures of any professor of jurisprudence, or have received any kind of legal instruction. And yet, when he had selected his vocation, Albert could not readily enter it. He encountered a serious and unlooked for obstacle as soon as he sought to enroll himself among the students of the Honorable Society of Lincoln's Inn.

His difficulty was that he could not command at once the requisite introduction and guarantee. He had money, but he needed friends.

On seeking information at the steward's office, he was told that he must state his name and age, and also the name and condition of his father, on declaring his wish to become a student of the college. He also learned that his application for membership must be supported by the recommendation of one bencher or two ordinary barristers of the Inn, who could, from personal knowledge of his nature and history, certify him to be "a gentleman of character and respectability," and in every respect "a fit person to be admitted a member of the Honorable Society of Lincoln's Inn, and to be called to the Bar." It would also be needful for him to give the name of one barrister of Lincoln's Inn, or the names of two worthy householders, who would insure payment to the college of all debts that he should incur to the society. Having found such introducers and sureties, he might be confident that the benchers would admit him to the Inn.

How could Mr. Otway comply with these moderate and reasonable requirements? The *Law List* contained the names of eight barristers with whom Albert Guerdon had an acquaintanceship that would have justified him in asking for their assistance. But Albert was no longer Albert Guerdon; he had become Albert Otway, and could not make himself known to any one of the eight gentlemen without sacrificing his disguise, revealing his imposture, and exposing himself to the risk of a disdainful rebuff. Probably the inn contained a few of the dead Bohemian's former acquaintances; but, even if the case were so, and he had known their names, he could not impose himself on them as their old friend, since his artificial appearance differed greatly from the aspect of the man whose name he had assumed. Moreover, there were other obvious reasons why he should shrink from attracting to himself the curious attention of any barrister who might have known the real Reginald Albert Otway. Nor would it be safe for him to force his way to the treasurer, or any other magnate of the learned society, and, as a person absolutely unknown within legal circles, ask for the great man's considerate patronage. Of course no bencher would reply favorably to such a petition until he had carefully ascertained the applicant's antecedents, and made inquiries which Albert wished no person to make about him.

It was clear to Albert that he could not even

gain admittance to an Inn of Law until he had, under his new name and aspect, won new friends, who could give him the requisite certificate of character. He had not felt how completely his transfiguration and change of name had placed him outside society, until he learned his need of a few of those simple and comparatively trivial services which men are accustomed to render one another as mere matters of course, without a thought of their full significance and importance.

He was also astonished and seriously discomforted by the discovery that, on applying for admission to Lincoln's Inn, it would be needful for him to declare his father's name and address. Having changed his name and personal looks, and committed the grand imposture at Ewebridge church, he had hoped that there would be no need of further deception. It had not occurred to him that the maintenance of his disguise would require him to be guilty of fresh falsehood. His natural disposition was thoroughly truthful—he scorned lies and liars; but disguise can seldom be sustained for any length of time without positive untruth. If Mr. Albert Otway were to avow himself to the benchers of Lincoln's Inn to be the son of John Guerdon, banker, late of Hammerhampton and Earl's Court, Boringdonshire, the secret, which he was intent on hiding, would be proclaimed to the special world which he meant to enter. He could not relinquish his chief purpose. There was, then, nothing for him to do but to assume a parentage, as well as a name, and to set it forth in a false declaration to the chiefs of the profession which he was about to enter.

It being needful for him to take this step, a perplexing and distasteful question arose. On whom should he father himself? After much painful deliberation, Albert concluded that his declaration on this point had better accord with his assumption of the Bohemian's name and place in existence. He knew but little concerning the dead man's family. In his last days the poor fellow had declared himself without brother, sister, or near cousin. On being asked whether he had no kindred of whom he would like to take leave, or to whom he would wish his death to be announced, he had averred that his nearest relatives were some second cousins, with whom he had never held any intercourse. Albert knew also that the artist was the son of a certain Martin Otway, Esq., formerly of Richmond, Surrey, who had lived with an appearance of prosperity and died poor. The Bohemian had once or twice in Albert's hearing spoken of his sire respectfully, as having been an honorable gentleman of a good stock. Knowing that any false declaration respecting his parentage would be attended with risk of inconvenience, and even of exposure, Albert thought that, since he must affiliate himself on some one, he would incur no especial peril in assigning his existence to Martin Otway, Esq.

It was in the first week of a new year that

Albert discovered the obstacles to his immediate admission to an Inn of Court; and, had it not been for a fortunate occurrence, he might have waited twice twelve months before finding the means for accomplishing the first step of his professional enterprise.

In nothing is fictitious art more true to real life than in the prominence which it gives to the class of unlooked-for events that persons unfamiliar with the ways of men are apt to stigmatize as improbable incidents. The destiny which shapes our roughly hewn courses is wont to work with occurrences that, in regard to their apparent fortuitousness, we usually speak of as casualties. How different the life of every gray-headed Englishman might have been, had not one of these mere accidents influenced his conduct at a critical moment! Had he not by pure chance, in an idle hour, read a particular advertisement in the *Times* newspaper, the writer of this page would have missed the greater part of the happiness he has experienced since his boyhood. Had not the lady, who is now reading this chapter under the shade of the limes upon her lawn, happened to mount a restive horse on a particular morning of her girlhood, and had not the gale snapped a dry bough from a certain elm as she rode under it, within sight of another rider, passing by fortuitously, her steed would never have run away, and the man, who within twelve months married her, would never have rescued her from the jaws of death and made her acquaintance. The hopes of youth are justified by the accidents of life. At the next turning of the street, down which he is loitering pensively, the young man may stumble on the new comrade who will put fortune into his hand, or point where wealth and honor may be won.

Albert Otway's meeting with Harold Cannick, at "The White Loaf," Shadow Court, Fleet Street, was one of those lucky adventures that never appear improbable till they and their consequences are recorded in novels. Harold Cannick was the casual acquaintance whom benignant Fortune threw in Albert's way for the achievement of some of his chief aims.

Mr. Cannick did not, on the average, dine at "The White Loaf" six times in a whole year, but Albert encountered him there by the luckiest chance conceivable.

Needs it to be said that Shadow Court is the brightest, cleanest, cheeriest little court of all the little courts that run into Fleet Street—that printers' devils and light porters are perpetually racing through it in the pursuit of business, to the utter banishment from the spot of all those small boys and girls who throng every blind alley of the town, but forsake—as ground unsuitable to their choicest games—every narrow yard through which there runs an incessant stream of passers?

No chop-house is in higher repute with the lawyers of the four Inns than "The White Loaf," with its two rooms (one large and one small) on the ground-floor, and its large room

overhead, and its picturesque tap-room, on the left of the entrance door, wherein a young lady of exquisite shape and ringlets spends her afternoons and evenings in drawing a score different liquors out of pieces of strangely fashioned furniture, that are made of highly polished mahogany, and are adorned with handles of whitest ivory. Avoided by the poorer articulated clerks and copying clerks, and all young men of prudence and narrow means, as a "dear place," "The White Loaf" is greatly in favor with young barristers, and elderly attorneys, and all kinds of well-to-do "City men," who think the enjoyment of its cleanliness, and the superlative goodness of its plain fare, cheaply purchased by a few additional pence on every dinner's cost.

Albert had first entered this house of entertainment in the course of a search after legal friends. On seeing two young men turn out of the Temple and walk eastward, toward the close of a dreary December afternoon, he had said to himself, "They look like two young barristers, turning out for dinner at a neighboring tavern. I will follow them, for they will probably lead me to some haunts of young lawyers, where I may pick up needful acquaintances." Acting on this resolution, he tracked the two comrades to "The White Loaf," and ate a beefsteak in a crowded room that contained several members of the profession which he meant to adopt. The quality of its frequenters was not the only recommendation of the tavern. Albert could not admire the portrait of the virtuous waiter hung on the wall above the fire-place on the dining-room, but he appreciated fully the cleanliness of his table-cloth, the goodness of his steak, and the virtues of his bitter ale. He observed, also, with approval, that the tables of the restaurant were liberally provided with all the best newspapers of the town. He became a frequenter at "The White Loaf," and, in the course of three weeks, won the cordial respect of William, the head-waiter.

He had thus established himself in William's good graces, and was eating his daily meal at a rather later hour than usual, when a portly, well-looking gentleman, with fair hair, blue eyes, open countenance, clever mouth, and the appearance of one who had numbered some fifty years, entered the room, and seated himself in an opposite box. Singularly free from the obsequiousness of tavern waiters toward ordinary guests, William's bearing to the new-comer exhibited an alacrity which indicated that the portly gentleman was a personage of mark to the chief servant of "The White Loaf." The theatres having already opened for the evening, the room was not full. The patrons of the chop-house were also patrons of the drama; and when the last arrival seated himself on a bench, and ordered his repast, there were two empty boxes in the eating-room, and no more than half a dozen customers in the whole apartment.

Eating leisurely, while he glanced alternately at the newspaper in front of his plate and at

the new-comer on the opposite side of the room, Albert divided his thoughts equally between his food, his journal, and the comely stranger. Remembering that he had seen him speaking to a queen's counsel in one of the courts of equity, during the progress of a cause in which the queen's counsel was a chief speaker, Albert had grounds for thinking that the stout, comely gentleman was a solicitor of high standing. On this point Albert was not at fault. The person whom he scrutinized furtively was Harold Cannick, senior partner of the firm of Cannick, Bolt & Patterson, solicitors, of Bedford Row. No legal firm held a more honorable position in the subordinate department of the Law than Cannick, Bolt & Patterson, of Bedford Row. They were solicitors for half a hundred of the greatest landowners of England, and never condescended to touch openly any business that was not of the highest character. For the conduct of inferior though respectable business which it was incumbent on them to transact, but inconsistent with their dignity to transact openly, they employed such comparatively humble though reputable solicitors as Messrs. Weaver & Gandrill, of Furnival's Inn, and Messrs. Broadbent & Greenacre, Walbrook, City.

In other respects, Harold Cannick was a man of mark. A solicitor in prodigious practice, who has written a very successful three-volume novel, is, at least, a social eccentricity; and Harold Cannick's "Daughters of Eve" was an excellent and greatly popular novel. An attorney who has won a Derby is as exceptional a person as a Quaker who has managed an opera-house; and, in the only year of his life when he took a deep interest in the turf, Mr. Cannick's "Rapier" ran in first at the chief race of Epsom Downs. A man of many experiences and friends, Harold Cannick had concerned himself in half a hundred matters that rarely win the attention of a prosperous solicitor in the highest grade of practice. One of the originators of the Criterion Club, St. James's Square—a club where dukes play whist for ducal stakes—he was also a chief member of the Jovial Outcasts, Hinde Street, Leicester Square, where gentlemen of more wit than wisdom lengthen their nights and shorten their days with whisky-and-water. He had raised more than one theatre of the town from neglect to fashion, and supplied half a score famous adventurers with the means of winning wealth and the world's applause. Indeed, with the exception of subsidizing a party newspaper, there was no single rash thing that gentlemen of wealth and Bohemian connections are tempted to do which Harold had not done. But, while diverting himself with the humors of the town, he had always been a prudent and industrious follower of his profession.

Harold Cannick liked to play the part of patron to young people of good natural endowments and adverse circumstances. He prided himself on being a discoverer and fosterer of

struggling genius. Having taken in hand one of the choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral, and given him a thorough musical training, he had seen him become one of the first singers of his day. He had made brilliant actresses out of little, beggarly damsels, whose cleverness and smartness had first attracted his attention, as they danced and gossiped in street gutters. He had set scores of needy aspirants on the way to affluence, merely because he saw that encouragement and timely aid would render them successful. The Royal Academy at this present time numbers three painters who remember gratefully that the solicitor was the first man to appreciate their powers and to help them to fortune. It was the same within the lines of the legal profession. He was always on the lookout for young men of high promise and no "connection with attorneys." It was his boast that he had given "silk" to half a dozen leaders of the bar whom he had discovered in indigence and friendliness. With good-humored insolence he would boast that, should he live to be seventy, half the occupants of the judicial bench would be judges of his creation. Having once adopted a *protégé*, he never deserted him. Having given him the start, he kept his man running. To admit himself disappointed in a man of his choice would have been to admit himself guilty of a mistake; and such a confession would have been unendurably humiliating to the patron whose propensity for befriending geniuses in distress was not more due to kindliness than egotism—to benevolence than to pride in his own sagacity.

At the time when he turned into the smaller parlor of "The White Loaf," and seated himself within full view of a gentleman in want of a patron, Harold Cannick was in need of a new *protégé*. Two years had passed since he had taken up a new man. His passion for patronizing required a fresh object.

Before he had finished his small rump-steak, Harold Cannick's looks had been thoroughly studied by the furtive observer. Albert Otway was taken by those looks—the open face, powerful features, blue eyes, clever mouth—and he decided to make overtures for conversation with their portly owner.

"I think I heard you ask for the *Globe* a minute since; here it is—I have done with it," he said, handing Harold Cannick the paper as he rose.

"Thank you—any thing new in it of importance?"

"Just nothing—except the announcement of the arrival of an important witness for the Babraham case."

"Ah! to be sure—Colonel Clintock, from South America."

Harold Cannick added, "That's no news to me. I parted with Colonel Clintock ten minutes before I turned into this place for a steak. Here, waiter, bring me a small tumbler of punch. Do you know the punch at this house?"

It is as soft and innocent as claret. If you don't know it, you should try a small tumbler." Acting on the suggestion, Albert at once asked William to bring another "small punch," and, at the same time, seated himself opposite the portly gentleman who had, in effect, though not in form, invited him to drink punch with him.

With a look of courteous welcome, Harold Cannick—at all times sociable, and, after feeding, always loquacious—intimated his approval of Albert's last act.

The drink having arrived, Mr. Cannock observed,

"Yes, Colonel Clintock will be an important witness at the rehearing. I am Sir Richard Babraham's solicitor."

Forthwith the conversation turned on the great Babraham case, which had, for the greater part of a year, been a subject of overshadowing interest at every London dinner-table. As every body was more or less familiar with the facts of the singular cause, Sir Richard Babraham's solicitor could speak of them fully without any breach of professional confidence; and he spoke of them with vigor and just a little pomposity, qualifying his otherwise gentlemanly address.

Having proved a good listener, Albert made a few remarks that displayed a lawyer-like appreciation of the issues and chief difficulties of the famous suit.

"True, true," rejoined Sir Richard Babraham's solicitor; "I see, sir, that you are a lawyer. By-the-way, I remember to have seen you watching proceedings in some of the courts."

"I am not a lawyer—but I mean to be one."

"A student for the bar, eh?"

"Not yet."

"Indeed! then you have no time to lose."

"I wish to lose none," Albert replied; "but I am just now under a difficulty which threatens to postpone longer than I wish my entrance to the legal profession."

"Indeed!" repeated Harold Cannick, who was curious to know the difficulty, which he could not suppose to be one of money."

"I have the pecuniary means," Albert explained, looking round and speaking louder, when he had seen that the parlor was deserted by every one but himself, his companion, and a little white-headed old gentleman who was slumbering at a distant corner of the room over a half-drunk glass of whisky-toddy, "as well as the desire to follow the law; but I can not at present enter myself as a student of an Inn of Court, because I am here in London so absolutely unknown that I can not produce the requisite certificates of character and fitness."

"Pooh, pooh! mere forms, my dear sir. It is easy to comply with them."

"I wish you would tell me how to comply with them at once. For myself, I see no quicker way than to wait for a year, or may be several years, until I have made friends who may render me the requisite service. And it is slow

work making friends, to a man who has scarcely an acquaintance in the city."

"You have a banker?"

"I have bankers—Mitcheson & Trevor, Lombard Street. But they only know that I have recently opened an account with them. I can't go to them on the strength of that small account, and ask them to beg some barristers of their acquaintance to certify the benchers of Lincoln's Inn that I am a reputable gentleman."

Harold Cannick smiled as he remarked, "Yours is a strange case."

"Probably such a case never before occurred."

"Tut, tut, there is no case so singular in this great city but that the town contains another very much like it. Do you smoke?"

"Yes."

"Then let us go up to the smoking-room and have a cigar. There will be no one there at this time. We can talk this business of yours over."

Of course Albert assented; and having mounted a high, rambling, ramshackle staircase, and entered the unoccupied smoking-room of "The White Loaf," he took a cigar from Mr. Harold Cannick's case.

Having accepted this slight favor from his new acquaintance, Albert spoke more fully of his circumstances and professional aims. He stated that he was without father or near relations; that his long residence on the Continent was chiefly accountable for his want of friends in London; that his pecuniary means were more than sufficient for a law student and struggling barrister. He admitted that London contained many persons who had known his father, but added, with obvious embarrassment, that there were reasons why he could not ask them to befriend him.

"You have not yet told me your name?"

Harold Cannick observed abruptly, when Albert had finished his statement.

"My name is Albert Otway."

"Eh? of the Shropshire Otways?"

"I come from a branch of that family; but I have no near relations."

"And, I presume, your father's name was Otway."

"His name was Martin Otway, and he lived for many years at Cleve Lodge, Richmond. I did not inherit my property from him. He died poor!"

A deep blush came to Albert's face as he said this; for he was not so practiced in falsehood as to be able to tell untruths with equanimity. Moreover, he was alive to the risk of detection which he ran in uttering the untruth. What if his new acquaintance had known Martin Otway and his Bohemian son? The fear was reasonable. Harold Cannick *had* known something of Martin Otway, but he had never encountered the son in Bohemia. Mr. Cannick observed the look of shame and apprehension that came to Albert's face as he spoke of Mar-

tin Otway, but he accounted erroneously for the young man's embarrassment and agitation. Like a gentleman as he was, Harold passed quickly from the delicate subject, and said not another word about his companion's parentage."

"Where," he added, "are you living, Mr. Otway?"

"I am lodging for the present in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury," answered Albert, who at the same time gave his card, with his address penned in the corner, to his acquaintance.

"Thank you," said the solicitor, when he had taken the card, and, after putting it in his pocket-book, had given his own calling-card in exchange for it. "Now, my dear sir, I must run away to keep an appointment. I will think over our interview; and you shall hear from me in the course of a day or two. In the mean time, Mr. Otway, be assured that I am favorably impressed by your frankness and excellent address. I think I shall see my way to be of service to you."

These last words were spoken heartily, but with a slight touch of the self-importance and pomposity which we have before remarked in the speaker's otherwise gentlemanly tone and bearing.

When he had left the chop-house of Shadow Court, and was walking westward to his club in St. James's Square, Harold Cannick said to himself: "What a strange coincidence! So that is Martin Otway's boy, of whose cleverness he used to boast. Poor lad! no wonder that he does not like to approach his father's old friends, and would fain separate himself as completely as possible from the whole paternal connection! His case is a devilish hard one, for he suffers for his father's sins. What right has a world to punish a son for a father's faults? But the world does it every day, mercilessly and barbarously. He is not much like his father, though there is something in him that reminds me of the sire. And he has good looks, good manner, good address, and a clear head. He saw precisely the importance of the very points in the Babraham case which the attorney-general pooh-poohs. There is the making of a man in him. And—" Harold Cannick paused abruptly in his soliloquy, and walked the whole distance from the church of St. Martin's in the Fields to the south-east entrance of St. James's Square, before he added, "By Jove, I'll take him up, and make a man of him! He has all the right points, and is a bit of blood that will win the first stakes, and do me credit. I'll take him up."

While Harold Cannick was thus deciding to make a man of Martin Otway's son, Albert was walking toward Queen's Square, thinking to himself: "So he is Harold Cannick, of the omnipotent firm of Cannick, Bolt & Patterson, Bedford Row. I like him, and I think he means to like me. If I could attach him to myself—or, rather, let me speak more modestly and say, if I could attach myself to the

great Mr. Harold Cannick—my fortune would be made."

Thus musing hopefully, Albert crossed the broad hall and walked up the wide staircase of the house—whilom the residence of an earl, who blazed in the brightest fashion of George the Second's London—in which he then lodged. Ten minutes later, Mr. Albert Otway, sitting within a yard of a good fire, and at a reading-table furnished with a student's lamp, had forgotten the outer world in his attentive perusal of Cruise's "Digest of the Laws respecting Real Property," a work that he had bought in the neighborhood of Chancery Lane, on learning from a treatise on legal education that it was a book which the earnest student of our laws should master thoroughly.

CHAPTER XX.

IN AND ABOUT LINCOLN'S INN.

On the following day, Mr. Albert Otway received an invitation to dine with Mr. Harold Cannick, in the course of the week, at the Criterion Club—an invitation which, it is needless to say, was accepted. A few days later, Albert dined at the solicitor's house in Regent's Park, when he was introduced to Mr. Cannick's important collection of pictures, and also to Mr. Cannick's wife and children. The wife was a gentlewoman of personal elegance and conversational cleverness, who had great influence over her husband, and was agreeably impressed by the style and manner of his young friend. The children were three girls, the eldest of whom was still in her thirteenth year. Mr. Cannick was thirty-five at the time of his marriage; and he had been married several years ere he became a father.

At these two dinners, Harold Cannick's favorable opinion of his *protégé* waxed stronger. The solicitor prided himself on his taste in the fine arts, and he was gratified by his guest's judicious praise of his Flemish paintings. He was also confirmed in his beneficent disposition toward Albert by Mrs. Cannick, who was good enough to inform her husband that she saw signs of possible greatness in the young man, who had evinced with becoming modesty his admiration of her musical knowledge and skill. Mrs. Cannick having thus delivered judgment in Albert's behalf, Mr. Cannick dismissed all doubts respecting the goodness of his choice of a "new man."

The solicitor having resolved to protect him, the doors of Lincoln's Inn were opened to Albert. Two barristers of Lincoln's Inn—juniors, with a proper regard for the professional favor of Cannick, Bolt & Patterson, of Bedford Row—put their signatures promptly to Albert's certificate of character. How could they hesitate to witness in his behalf, from their personal knowledge of his worth, when his social respectability had so unimpeachable a spon-

sor as the senior partner of the strongest firm of solicitors in all London? Knowing Harold Cannick, it was a matter of course that they knew the merit of his cordially recommended friend.

It was still the first week of Hilary term, when Albert Otway ate his first dinner in Lincoln's Inn Hall, and had his first interview with Mr. Snibsworth, the conveyancer, in whose pupils' room he was advised by Harold Cannick to acquire a rudimentary knowledge of an important department of his profession.

A small man with prominent nose, lean visage, swarthy complexion, and a quick, sharp, flighty way of speaking, Mr. Snibsworth failed to win Albert's respect at their first meeting, when the man of many pupils and clients received the new applicant for instruction, with half a dozen hurriedly spoken sentences, and no affectation of care for his welfare. Though his pupils' room brought him in £1500 a year, and turned out an amount of indifferently done work, that gave the teacher at least another £1500 per annum, Mr. Snibsworth could never speak of it with courtesy, or think of it without sentiments of active hostility. For the most part, its occupants were a class of persons for whom the trainer had no charity. Some of them were "mere simpletons, ignorant of the first principles of law." Others—smart enough for a ball-room or smoking-party, and possessing a little legal lore—had "no knowledge that could be turned to account." They could not be trusted to do any thing by themselves; and, "confound them," Mr. Snibsworth would exclaim, testily, "they will bother me by asking me to explain points to them. Scarcely a day passes but I have to snub one of them for pestering me in that way." Over his claret, at legal dinner-parties in the west of town, Mr. Snibsworth delighted to narrate, in a tone of comic self-commiseration, how his pupils' room afflicted him—how this pupil's serious uncle from the country implored him (Snibsworth) to pay particular attention to his nephew; and how another pupil had the audacity to say to him, "I have paid you a hundred guineas, sir, and visited your chambers every day for six months, and this is the second time I have ever been able to speak to you." Enlarging on this anecdote, Snibsworth would say, "They have an absurd notion that I am bound to lecture them on first principles, and coach them in the A B C of my wretched business, in return for their guineas." On receiving Albert, Mr. Snibsworth remarked with piquant frankness, "I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Otway, and also to take your money; but mind, I don't engage to teach you any thing. You'll see any number of papers in my pupils' room, and you'll see what I do with them; and, if you can't pick up law from them, you'd better not follow the profession."

Albert was not disheartened; and, in the course of six weeks, he was satisfied that Harold Cannick had sent him to a good school.

To do Mr. Snibsworth justice, he had a quick eye for a pupil with the head and knowledge that could be turned to account in his factory of legal instruments. And he soon saw that Albert could help himself out of papers, and be his own demonstrator. Catching and humoring the conveyancer's peculiarities, Albert never asked the learned man a question—never tried to exchange a word with him—never sought to catch his eye. Weeks after he had turned off some papers relating to large commercial contracts in a style which he knew had been commended by the lawyer, Albert persisted in his policy of leaving Mr. Snibsworth alone. At first Mr. Snibsworth was astonished by the pupil's discreetness. Ere long he was piqued by his silence. "You are a strangely silent man, Mr. Otway," the conveyancer observed, when Albert had been a frequenter of his chambers for about three months; "you do a deal of work, but you never ask me a question about any point." Where to Albert answered, "I came here to read your papers, Mr. Snibsworth, not to waste your time, or my own, by talking with you; and the papers seldom give me a point on which I want your opinion." The conveyancer rejoined, "No doubt; papers explain themselves—don't they?" "Moreover," Albert added, "at the opening of our acquaintance you asked me particularly not to bother you with questions."

This reply tickled Mr. Snibsworth prodigiously. Opening the large mouth of his little, sharp, thin face, he screamed with delight, till the sharp, hyena-like yapping and yelping of his laughter made his "idiots" in the pupils' room wonder what on earth was going on between Otway and their nominal instructor. "Yes, yes," exclaimed Mr. Snibsworth, when his amusement had subsided, "that is what I say to keep the fools and idiots at a distance. But you are no fool, Otway. You'll do. You'll be a lawyer."

"And a good one," rejoined Albert the Silent, evincing natural delight at the conveyancer's compliment.

To return, however, to the opening week of Albert's career at Lincoln's Inn—a point in his personal story from which we have advanced somewhat too far.

After his long exclusion from the companionship of men, Albert thoroughly enjoyed his first dinners in the hall of his Honorable Society. He was exhilarated by the bright lamps and largeness of the lofty chamber, the hum and babble of the talkers, the running about of the waiters, and the clattering of the hundreds of knives and forks. He relished the sound, wholesome fare, though it was the fashion for the youngsters, fresh from Oxford and Cambridge, and affecting what they meant to be towny airs of club-life and West End fashion, to profess disdain for the homely joints and familiar wines. Albert could not concur with these supercilious gentlemen in condemning the joints as barbaric viands, and stigmatizing

the rather fruity port and sherry as poisonous compounds, manufactured in Gray's Inn Lane. On the contrary, though he preferred claret to port, he took his appointed share of the bottle (among four) of the Methuen juice with thankfulness. Never having been at an English university, he found the excitement of novelty in the circumstances and details of the collegiate banquet. When grace after meat had been said by the Honorable Society's chaplain, he found pleasure in watching the white-headed, and iron-gray-headed, and still black-headed benchers move off in single file from the high table, and in wondering how many years would elapse ere he should figure among them. He even derived a boyish satisfaction from the ridiculous strip of bombazine which he was required to wear on his shoulders during the academic repast. But most he enjoyed the free, unrestrained, and sometimes boisterous talk of the two long students' tables, at which he encountered men of every age and every land subject to Her Britannic Majesty. He was animated by the light, slangy, and yet gentleman-like gossip of the young fellows, who discoursed about their pastimes at Oxford and Cambridge, the incidents of the London theatres, the squabbles of the newspapers, the sports of their rural homes, or the scandals of London society. These quite young men were in a large majority at the students' tables; but among them there appeared copper-skinned gentlemen of Oriental race, and prosperous colonists, who, after making fortunes in Australia, were veneering themselves with professional dignity by eating their way to the Bar. One day Albert dined with a middle-aged cavalry officer of the Indian army, bent on returning to his regiment with a wig and gown in his luggage. The next day he drank wine with a chatty little Canadian, who, having won wealth as a Montreal attorney, was preparing himself for a political career in his colony by making himself an English barrister. At a third dinner he dined with a clerk in the War Office, a reporter of the House of Commons "gallery," and a popular novelist.

Albert took his first eight dinners in the hall with unqualified satisfaction, but the ninth dinner was less agreeable.

In Heaven's time every man meets his best friend, and in the devil's, says the proverb, he encounters his worst enemy. At his ninth dinner in the hall, Albert for the first time exchanged words with the man against whom he was destined to conceive a deadly enmity.

There is a manner which makes friends of all men, and there is a manner—an insolent, disdainful, aggressive bearing—that rouses the aversion and wrathful antagonism of every creature of human-kind toward whom it is exhibited. Young men are more likely to have this manner than older ones, who have learned by experience the influence of courtesy on coadjutors and adversaries. Occasionally it is found in persons of gentle birth and breeding, where

a naturally overbearing temper has not been softened by the gentler emotions, or corrected by opposition. It appears in its fullest repulsiveness in clever, pugnacious, domineering men, who have forced their way upward from poverty and disesteem in the teeth of adverse and irritating circumstances. Indeed, it seldom happens that men of these qualities and antecedents are altogether innocent of the bearing which is the most offensive of all bad styles. The adventurer, who has spent ten years of his earlier manhood in bearing down and trampling on his competitors in humble ways of life, rarely escapes from the long conflict without the arrogant habit and insolent address which distinguish this manner. He assails his comrades unconsciously, and sometimes goads them into vindictive fury when he imagines that he is pleasing them.

Several disdainful epithets have been invented for the express purpose of rendering this manner especially odious among gentlemen. It has been stigmatized "cocky" and "bump-tious." In these polite pages let it be styled more mildly the aggressive and pugnacious manner. To explain how it exasperates society, let it be observed that the pugnacious manner wounds the sensitive in their self-love. No sooner are they brought face to face with the pugnacious offender than they imagine vividly how insolent he would be in a controversy; and the quick, irritating imagination of what he might do in the way of unscrupulous and disdainful antagonism causes them to feel for him as though he were actually doing his worst to harass, humiliate, and crush them. They are at war with him before he has entertained a thought hostile to them. They are his enemies, even though his aim is to win their friendship.

The discipline of a public school, and the training of an English university, are the best correctives of a boy's disposition to adopt the pugnacious manner. But though he had been abundantly thrashed at Eton, and laughed down at Cambridge, Frederick Sharpswell, Fellow of Trinity, and second wrangler of his year, had not been cured of his constitutional arrogance. The training of school and college, and the humanizing influences of the good society in which he had moved from boyhood, had only moderated his natural impudence, and taught him that he could not always indulge his overbearing spirit with impunity. Gentleman though he was by birth and culture, he retained the most ungentle of tempers. Toward women his manner was faultless. Nothing could be more respectful, sympathetic, and chivalric than his customary demeanor to ladies; and he could make himself fairly agreeable to the sterner sex when he was on his guard over his worst propensities. But he could be, and often was, exasperatingly insolent to men of whose resentment he had no fear.

Coming up from Cambridge with his academic honors fresh upon him, Fred Sharpswell

had been received at Lincoln's Inn by the students and some of the junior Bar with the respect due to his intellectual achievements. The young Fellow of Trinity was a man of mark and promise, and the attentions offered to him at the legal college heightened his self-satisfaction. If they put him in good humor with himself, and disposed him to be more than ordinarily gracious to his equals, they failed to render him more complaisant to his inferiors.

On the occasion of Albert's ninth appearance in the Lincoln's Inn Hall, Fred Sharpswell entered the same refectory several minutes after the commencement of dinner. Unable to select three congenial messmates from the law students who had known him at Cambridge, he was constrained to make the fourth of the only incomplete mess at the long tables. Albert, an Irish journalist (no longer a young man), and a sedately prim youth, with a pair of large spectacles raised before his unsteady eyes, were the three men to whose society Mr. Sharpswell was conducted by the steward, officiating for the moment as a master of the ceremonies.

Mr. Sharpswell was not pleased with the prospect of dining at the lowest mess of a long table, with three men of whom he knew nothing, and at a part of the Hall where he would be exposed to the draught from incessantly swinging doors. It was his habit to think slightly of all persons on seeing them for the first time.

Drawing himself to the full height of his slight and elegant figure, he paused before the vacant seat, and surveyed, with a supercilious stare, the three members of the incomplete mess. Having thus regarded the trio, Mr. Sharpswell threw back his handsome face, and, assuming a look and tone of grievance, inquired of the steward whether he could not find him a more desirable place. The master of ceremonies could not oblige the gentleman. The Hall was full, and every other mess was "made up."

Shrugging his shoulders, and throwing an expression of injury and endurance into his countenance, as he again regarded the three strangers with manifest disapproval, Mr. Sharpswell observed, "Well, then, I must sit here. Grace will be said in a few minutes, and then I can escape." Having thus declared his intention to escape at the earliest possible moment from companions so obviously unworthy of his consideration, he seated himself, and, after curling his thin lip contemptuously at the prim youth with weak eyes, fixed his gaze on Albert, and tried to stare him out of countenance. Having returned the look with a penetrating scrutiny, Albert pushed the fish to the new-comer with sufficient politeness.

"I am afraid you will find your fish cold," Mr. Otway observed, glancing at the lukewarm tail-half of a large sole.

Instead of replying to this remark, Mr. Sharpswell, turning to the waiter in attendance

on two messes, requested him to take "that thing" away, and fetch him a pat of butter and a clean knife. Fred Sharpswell was one of the students who seized every occasion to condemn the dinners as unfit for gentlemen.

Having refreshed himself with a piece of bread-and-butter and a glass of table ale, Mr. Sharpswell made a second futile attempt to gaze Albert out of countenance.

"Who the deuce can that close-cropped fellow be, who has the impudence to stare at me in that fashion? Some Government clerk, I suppose. The fellow has neither the Oxford nor the Cambridge style. He's a snob!" thought Mr. Sharpswell, infuriated by the coolness with which Albert returned his gaze.

"He is a well-looking fellow; in his aquiline profile, and thin lips, and dark eyes, and carefully trimmed whiskers, he has more than an average share of good looks," thought Albert. "But he is as insolent a cub as I have met for many a day. I should like to worry him!"

The two young men exchanged glances of aversion. Theirs was a case of mutual enmity at first sight.

On the appearance of the roast leg of mutton for the four, Fred Sharpswell, to whom it fell by the courtesy of the tables to have the first cuts, condescended to help himself to two thin slices of the joint.

Having helped himself daintily, and pushed the dish toward the Irish journalist on his left hand, Mr. Sharpswell expressed his contempt for roast-mutton, and also for the general badness of the dinners in Hall.

"The dinners are good enough," said Albert, in a spirit of opposition.

"For those who like them, and are not accustomed to better," returned Fred Sharpswell, tartly, with an intonation which implied that probably his opposite messmate had no large experience in delicate feeding.

When each of the four men had taken his turn with the carving-knife and fork, the Irish journalist, making an effort toward common good-fellowship, observed that the new opera at Her Majesty's Theatre was a success; all the papers applauded it.

"No doubt," remarked Mr. Sharpswell, who suspected that the Irishman was a journalist. "But the writers on the press praise whatever they are ordered to praise. No one pays attention to what they say."

"I am told," said Albert, addressing the journalist, "that it was never presented more magnificently, or rendered by better artists."

"That may be," interposed Mr. Sharpswell, with a sneer, "for it is presented now for the first time."

"You are mistaken," retorted Albert, smiling triumphantly, as he saw an opening to snub his adversary. "When I was in Venice in '44, it was the opera of the season."

"You *may* have been in Venice," rejoined Mr. Sharpswell, with an accent which almost implied a doubt of his antagonist's statement

on an immaterial point, "but you certainly did not hear Verdi's 'Ernani' there in '44."

"Accept, sir, an assurance that you are wrong from a man who had some concern in bringing out the opera at Venice in that year."

"Indeed!" responded Mr. Sharpswell, raising his eyebrows. "Then, of course, I must bow to your special knowledge, and admit myself in error. I am not a fiddler."

"The wine, sir," observed the journalist, glancing first at the offensive messmate and then at the bottle of port-wine, "is with you. Would you fill your glass and pass the decanter?"

"Not even to oblige you," returned Mr. Sharpswell, "can I take any of that black poison; but I have much pleasure in passing the mixture."

"Black poison! Bedad! it is a sound and generous wine," said the burly man of letters and middle age, filling his glass.

"Then, sir," replied Mr. Sharpswell, with a mockery of politeness, "I have much pleasure in giving you my share of the liquor."

The Celtic blood of the insulted man was fired by this insolent speech.

"Bedad! sir," he exclaimed, with a strong Irish brogue, as he turned a pair of angry eyes to the offender, "is that the way in which you speak to an Oirish gentleman? You may know a good deal about eating and drinking, but allow me to have the plizure of telling you that you have much to acquire still in the way of good manners."

Mr. Sharpswell had not meant to expose himself to such an attack. The irascible Celt had only told the truth, and, his provocation considered, had not told it too roundly.

The offender was aware that he had provoked his punishment by inordinate rudeness, and had, therefore, no right to complain of the rebuke. But this only increased his irritation at the peal of laughter with which Albert and the youth of weak eyes signified their approval of the Irishman's indignation.

"Port is not my favorite wine," said Albert, bowing to the gentleman from Oireland, when he had done laughing at Mr. Sharpswell's discomfiture; "but you must allow me, sir, to drink to you as a social benefactor."

Whereupon the social benefactor and Albert and the weak-eyed boy with large spectacles, making common cause against the disturber of harmony, drank wine together, and went on to chat pleasantly among themselves, without taking any more notice of Mr. Sharpswell, who, as soon as grace was said, left the Hall.

"Who is that man?" inquired Albert of his messmates, when Mr. Sharpswell had departed.

"I don't know his name," answered the Irish journalist; "but at Dooblin he would be thought a prodigious snob."

"His name is Sharpswell," said the youth of weak eyes, "and I believe he is a clever fellow, and is expected to do well at the Bar. He was a high wrangler at Cambridge. He is a

Fellow of Trinity; but, all the same for that, he has a bad character in Hall for taking men down, and making a fool of himself."

"Indeed? Is that Sharpswell?" ejaculated Albert, in a voice of surprise.

"Oh! you have heard of him before?" asked the Irishman.

"Yes—I have heard of him before, though I have only now seen him for the first time."

Ten minutes later, as he walked through the turnstile, and, after crossing Holborn, wended his way toward Queen's Square, Albert Otway said to himself, "So that is my second cousin, Frederick Sharpswell, of Trinity, Cambridge. He is an elegant, well-looking fellow; and his successes at his university declare him no fool. But what an overbearing, supercilious, aggressive snob he is! I hate him! And, from his manner of staring at me, I infer that I am not precisely to his taste. He wants to be taken down several pegs. Perhaps his second cousin in disguise is the man who is appointed to teach him his proper place in this world."

CHAPTER XXI.

ALBERT CULTIVATES FRED SHARPSWELL'S HATRED.

THE qualities which inspire men with mutual detestation must be attended with certain powers of physical attraction which draw them together in spite of their moral antagonism. By what other theory can we account for the frequency with which acquaintances at feud are brought face to face with one another? How else can we explain the fact that, having hated each other at first sight, and hating each other more intensely after every fresh interview, Albert Otway and Frederick Sharpswell were continually finding themselves *vis-à-vis* in the same mess in Lincoln's Inn Hall? If Albert came in late to the collegiate dinner, he was sure to find that the only place for him was a seat within three feet of his enemy. Again and again it happened that Frederick Sharpswell had selected his three companions for dinner, and was congratulating himself on having a place where his ears would not be offended by his adversary's voice, when one of the three men would slip away to a party on the other side of the Hall, and make room for the hateful Otway near the young Fellow of Trinity. Each of the men tried to avoid, and was always approaching the other.

In justice to Mr. Sharpswell, it must be recorded that he seldom behaved so badly as on his first meeting with the object of his instinctive aversion. It was rare for him to be so completely off his guard, and so wholly wanting in gentlemanly self-respect, as on that occasion of misdemeanor. But even when he constrained himself to be formally civil, or at least decently indifferent in his manner to the object of his abhorrence, he made himself un-

speakably disagreeable to Harold Cannick's *protégé*. On the other hand, instead of endeavoring to conciliate his second cousin, Albert Otway merely clothed his dislike of him with a thin veil of conventional politeness. The two young men were perpetually thrusting red-hot needles into each other. On no subject could they talk without differing pug-naciously. Arrogant to many persons, Mr. Sharpswell was especially dogmatic to Albert. Abounding in courtesy and good humor to every one else, Mr. Otway was abrupt, and sometimes slightly quarrelsome, to the kinsman whom he imagined to be unaware of their relationship by blood.

In the course of two or three terms, the obvious antagonism of the two men was an affair of gossip at the students' tables. Like all students for the Bar, they were habitually free, if not loquacious talkers, out of care for their professional interests, which require them to be facile speakers. At Cambridge, Sharpswell had been known among his detractors as an irrepressible chatterer; and Lincoln's Inn only stimulated his egotistic delight in his own voice. At Chambers, though silent by design to Mr. Snibsworth, Albert was sufficiently conversational with his fellow-pupils; and in Hall he talked abundantly for pure enjoyment's sake, and with the purpose of making himself known to men, as well as for elocutionary practice. With Mr. Otway and Mr. Sharpswell, to exchange words was to exhibit differences of opinion. They were both law-reformers, but never concurred in any one proposal for the improvement of the law. In politics they were not far apart as to principles, Albert being a very moderate liberal, and his cousin a decidedly liberal conservative; but had the one been an ultra radical, and the other an Eldonian Tory, they could not have contended more warmly respecting the merits of public men, parties, and measures.

"Pardon me," Mr. Sharpswell observed, sneeringly, in Hall one day; "pardon me, Otway, if you had read mathematics, you would not say so."

"A man *may* have read mathematics," retorted Albert, throwing a look of ridicule at the Fellow of Trinity, "without having been at Cambridge."

"Doubtless," rejoined Mr. Sharpswell, "a man may be a scholar without having gone to a public school. But it is a fact that in England Cambridge men are almost the only readers of the higher mathematics."

"Let it be so. That does not affect our controversy respecting the wave-principle, and the best lines for a ship. It is on mathematical grounds that I maintain that you are in error. Take this illustration."

The illustration was given, and the giver followed it up with a few remarks which satisfied the knot of wranglers among whom he was sitting that he could not be reproached with mathematical ignorance. Worse still for Mr.

Sharpswell's temper, the illustration and comments proved him to have been ridiculously wrong on the question of mathematics. He saw smiles of amusement on the faces of the critical hearers of the discussion, one of whom remarked, bluntly,

"Pon my honor, Sharpswell, you have been turned clean inside out by Otway, though he never read mathematics at Cambridge."

"Obviously, Otway knows something of mathematics, and in this matter he scores one against me," replied Fred Sharpswell, griggishly, while he strove to cover his retreat with a compliment to, and an ungenerous reflection on, his victor. The man had a nasty habit of preluding an insult with a civil speech. "If all non-university men," he continued, "had your knowledge of mathematics, Otway, I should modify my opinion that no man without a university degree ought to be allowed to enter an Inn of Court."

Priding himself justly on his Cambridge quality and status, Fred Sharpswell was inordinately supercilious toward barristers and law students who had not graduated at Oxford or Cambridge. He affected to regard them as plebeian intruders into a profession from which they ought to be excluded by a rigid ordinance. More than once he had annoyed his antagonist by the utterance of this narrow prejudice against a large proportion of the Bar.

Albert was not so thin-skinned that he would have resented this opinion, had it emanated from any other man than Sharpswell; but coming from the arrogant Fellow of Trinity, after a series of small impertinences from the same source, it nettled him more than prudence allowed him to reveal.

"Your exclusive rule," he observed, "would have deprived the law of some of its brightest ornaments; as well as a large number of its soundest and most honorable practitioners."

"That may be," rejoined Mr. Sharpswell, throwing a malicious rattle into his most wiry tone of voice, "but I do hold that, on offering himself as a candidate for the Bar, a man should exhibit certain credentials of his fitness to associate with the members of a liberal profession."

"A university degree is no conclusive evidence of much culture."

"Anyhow it certifies that a man has been trained among gentlemen."

"To a certain extent," replied Albert, with an appearance of good humor. "But just as a man may take honors at Cambridge without being a really good mathematician, it is possible for him, on leaving his university, to be a decidedly uncongenial companion for men of the world and good-breeding."

Whereupon the approvers of Albert's remarks on ship-building burst out laughing; and they laughed yet again on seeing the blood leap to Fred Sharpswell's face.

But Lincoln's Inn Hall was not the only place where the two enemies exchanged stinging words and affronts that rankled where they

were planted in sensitive self-love and jealous pride.

The students and junior bar of the four Inns had three or four debating-societies, of which "The Eldon" was by far the most important. The Eldonians met once a fortnight during the law season, if one may be allowed the expression, and discussed questions of law in the same large room of a Fleet Street tavern, which on certain other evenings of the month resounded with the jovial strains of the Convivial Warblers. Sharpswell and Otway were Eldonians, and regular speakers at the club. It was at "The Eldon" that Fred Sharpswell made himself known as a law student who might do well in his profession. His earlier speeches had favorably impressed their hearers who, on the strength of his self-confidence and fluency of utterance, and also on the strength of his academic rank and familiar connection with a strong firm of London attorneys, predicted that he would make a quick march to the dignities of the law. Having entered Lincoln's Inn twelve months earlier than his antagonist, Fred Sharpswell had acquired a leading position at "The Eldon" when Albert Otway was brought to the club for the first time. Ere the next long vacation came, Fred Sharpswell wished that Albert had never heard of the Eldonians, who, having witnessed a few conflicts between the cousins, in which Fred came off second best, began to lose something of their former admiration for the quick sarcastic talker. When they had once been put in comparison, Sharpswell and Otway soon came to be regarded at "The Eldon" as a pair of gladiators, bound to fight for the amusement of the company. It was observed that Sharpswell was the showy, Albert the steady combatant; that if Sharpswell justified his name by quickness and acuteness, Otway had the larger and clearer mind. It was remarked that Otway had greatly the advantage of his adversary in temper. So long as he was cool, and things went well with him, Sharpswell could pour forth bitter sarcasms and spiteful suggestions, in the manner of a famous leader of the Chancery Bar, whom he had taken for his master of forensic style; but in reply, when he had been hard pressed and much worried by his opponents, he was apt to become angry and abusive. On the other hand, no contradiction ever ruffled Otway's equanimity, or provoked him to forgetfulness of his own dignity. Moreover, it did not escape the Eldonians that the two men cordially disliked each other. The high-handed courtesy and forbearance with which Albert affected to treat his rival were even more expressive of deep-rooted dislike than the sneering insolence and uppishness that characterized Sharpswell's hostile bearing.

"It's good fun seeing those men spar now," said little Ben Trivett, at this day best known to the public as a writer of novels and comedies; "but what will it be when they are called to Bar, if they practice in the same court. How they will abhor each other by the time they have

both taken silk!" When he made this speech, Ben Trivett was an Eldonian and Templar, with a hankering after literature, for which he felt his natural aptitude, and with a vague purpose of "following the law," in compliance with the wishes of a wealthy uncle.

Enemies in Hall, and rivals at "The Eldon," Otway and Sharpwell were also fellow-pupils in Mr. Snibsworth's chambers. Albert had been some six months with Snibsworth, when, on entering the pupils' room one day at an unusually late hour, he saw his adversary sitting over a set of papers. Having exchanged nods of recognition, the two kinsmen silently resolved that the chamber of study should be another scene of contention and mutual offensiveness. "If he ventures to annoy me here, I'll put the snob down with a strong hand," thought Mr. Otway. "If I had known that the prig was one of Snibsworth's men," Mr. Sharpwell said to himself, "I would have kept away from this place." On this new ground of battle, Albert had altogether the advantage of his adversary. While his steady and silent industry, together with signal aptitude for legal work, raised him higher in Snibsworth's opinion, Fred Sharpwell's loquacity and magnificent arrogance were peculiarly irritating to the conveyancer, who was no less frank about his liking for the one than with respect to his dislike of the other student. "Sharpwell a man of promise!" the great draughtsman remarked contemptuously to some gentlemen of the law who were predicting signal success for the Fellow of Trinity—"he'll be a brilliant failure! For a few years he'll impose on a few solicitors by his impudence, and chatter himself into business; and then, when his clients have found him out, he'll fall out of the running. Otway is another man. He'll make a name for himself." And this judgment, being repeated by its hearers to their acquaintance, was not long in coming to Lincoln's Inn Hall, where Albert, before the close of the second year of his student's course, was commonly described as "Snibsworth's favorite pupil."

While Albert thus grew in the conveyancer's good graces and Mr. Sharpwell's detestation, his hold on Harold Cannick's favor strengthened steadily as the time drew nearer for his call to the Bar.

The intercourse of the solicitor and the student for the Bar ripened into a close friendship. On Harold Cannick's side there was no exhibition of patronage; and, though he felt the value of the powerful solicitor's advice, and knew that the support of Cannick, Bolt & Patterson would insure his rapid success at the Bar, Albert never stooped to flattery, or any kind of mean artifice, for the purpose of gratifying his ally. Old enough to be Albert's father, and having no son on whom he could expend a parental benevolence, Harold Cannick regarded the young man with paternal solicitude, and was justified alike by his years, and position, and purpose, in treating him as a junior.

By birth and breeding they were men of the same degree. By age, however, Harold was distinctly the young lawyer's superior; and this difference of years rendered it all the more easy for Albert to express with deferential courtesy his just appreciation of his benefactor's services.

The exercise of influence, which opened the gates of Lincoln's Inn to Albert, was scarcely the most important of these services. At the solicitor's house Mr. Otway made the acquaintance of solicitors only a few degrees less prosperous than their host—gentlemen who, in their willingness to oblige the chief of the great Bedford Row firm, pledged themselves to forward Mr. Otway's professional interests as soon as he should be called to the Bar. There, also, he encountered non-legal people, whose conversation diverted his mind from its secret griefs, so that, on returning to his solitary rooms, he seldom brooded despondently over the past. The affection which the solicitor exhibited for his young friend caused it to be presumed in Mr. Cannick's circle that Albert and he were connected by ties of blood as well as friendship. It was even rumored that Mr. Cannick had set his heart on having Albert for a son-in-law as soon as the young lawyer should be established in his profession, and the eldest of Mrs. Cannick's daughters should have attained a marriageable age. Now and then Albert accompanied his protector to the theatres, and to those circles of artistic Bohemia in which the solicitor was honored as the generous protector of genius in difficulties. Having thus taken Albert openly by the hand, Mr. Cannick put his name down for admission to the Criterion Club, which, founded though it had been in recent years by gentlemen of the middle rank of life, had, through a series of propitious circumstances, acquired an aristocratic reputation.

"By-the-way," Harold Cannick observed, somewhat testily, to Albert, shortly after the latter had been entered in the candidates' book at the Criterion, "your friend Mr. Sharpwell is making himself very disagreeable at the Criterion."

"I did not know he belonged to the Club."

"He was only twenty-one when he joined it. His father was one of the founders; and his father's old friends on the committee brought him in. I was fool enough to rote for the puppy when he was at Cambridge."

"It seems that you don't like him more than I do."

"He is an insolent puppy!" returned Mr. Cannick, flushing with a heat which showed that he had received some sharp provocation from the offender, who had shortly before been called to the Bar.

"Well, he is insolent sometimes—and I must own that he is a puppy. But he is a cleverish fellow."

"He is a pert jackanapes," the solicitor ejaculated, hotly. "Of all puppies, your cleverish puppy is the most offensive."

"What has he been doing at the Criterion?"

"Gad, Otway, the other evening, while I was smoking a solitary cigar in the little inner smoking-room, I heard him talking away in the large divan to a party of young fellows about the ignorance and bad breeding of solicitors. He was of opinion that no solicitor should be allowed to join a West End club! According to him, solicitors of the best standing are mere 'white trash' in comparison with briefless barristers. This from a young fellow whose father was only a trumpery commissioner of something or other! Pooh! he is an insufferable puppy!"

Albert laughed, partly at the fervor of his indignant friend, but chiefly at the prodigious mistake which Sharpswell had committed in his reckless loquacity.

"He would have spoken more cautiously, and in a lower tone," said Harold's young friend, "had he known that you were within hearing."

"No doubt. And I can assure you he lowered his tone, and looked mighty foolish, when I strolled into the large divan with my cigar in my mouth. He saw from my face that I had overheard him. He is one of those uppish young fellows who would toady me for a brief, and all the while look down on me because I am a solicitor. Anyhow, Mr. Sharpswell knows he won't have to thank me for any of his success at the Bar."

"Did you speak to him?"

"Speak to him! I let him know my opinion of him by looking at him."

"That man has a positive genius for making a fool of himself. He has every thing on his side—good looks, mental quickness, sufficient means, Cambridge honors! Why, Mr. Cannick, he has nearly every advantage that a man of our rank can reasonably ask for at the outset of life, except tact and conciliatory manner."

"And the want of them, Otway, will be his ruin. Mark my word, he may make a fair running at first, but he'll be a failure, when you are only getting into the full swing of business."

Having delivered himself of this opinion, and thereby vented his hottest indignation, Mr. Cannick bade his young friend good-bye at the corner of Regent Circus, and strolled homeward to Mrs. Cannick and his girls and his Flemish pictures.

As Albert sauntered toward Fleet Street, for a beefsteak at The White Loaf, he meditated on his strange hatred of his second cousin, and wondered whether that remote kinsman would ever penetrate Albert Otway's disguise, and discover his cousin Guerdon in his bitter adversary.

"So I am to cross his path at every turn," thought Albert. "I spar with him in Hall and at The Eldon; I made him a joke at Snibsworth's chambers, and now it appears we are destined to worry each other at the Criterion Club."

CHAPTER XXII.

RIVALS AT THE BAR.

To read the announcement of a death in a newspaper is sometimes to realize with agonizing vividness the joy of former days. Gained from the close type of a journal's brief, unsympathetic notice of recent deaths, the intelligence that a woman whom he loved long since has passed away from her familiar circle, fills the reader's mind with gloom. He recalls in an instant the voice that was the music of a household, and the smiles that gave beholders gladness. He remembers trivial courtesies and pleasant acts of kindness, forgotten, perhaps, ever since they were rendered in careless amiability. The scenes which she irradiated with the brightness of her beauty and goodness rise to his recollection, and he feels like one who gazes at the shuttered windows and silent walls of an empty mansion, where, in happier time, he was the frequent and ever-welcome guest of light-hearted entertainers.

Albert Otway experienced this bitter sadness in an early month of his third year at Lincoln's Inn, when he learned from the *Times* that Mary, the wife of Sir James Darling, Knt., Q.C., and County Court Judge of Boringdonshire, had died at Arleigh Manor. Yes, the event, to which he had, little more than two years since, looked forward, as one of the sure consequences of trouble in which he had borne a part, was now a recorded fact; and, had it been unanticipated, it could not have occasioned him a sharper or more sudden sense of unutterable desolation. He felt a generous pity for the kindly, timid, world-fearing knight, whose worst faults were those of commonplace selfishness and vanity. He would fain have written the old man a few words of comfort. For his grand imposture he was fitly punished by the grief with which he recognized his inability to pen a line, or do a single act to lessen Lottie's affliction. How could her dead lover venture to console her? He might not, even for the mitigation of his own distress, seek from any of his old Boringdonshire acquaintances how she endured her trial. From them and from her he was separated by the grave, in which the Bohemian lay beneath a lying coffin-lid.

On recovering from the shock which Mary Darling's timely death occasioned him, Albert sought relief for his feelings, and escaped from harrowing reflection, by applying more strenuously than ever to legal study. Hitherto he had shown no disposition to commit the common fault of studious and resolutely ambitious young men. But in the last year of his student's course he concentrated all his powers on his special work, and in his zeal exhibited so dangerous a disinclination to qualify exhausting labor with suitable recreation, that Harold Cannick more than once felt it right to caution "his new man" against the danger of over-reading. On three separate occasions, after vainly endeavoring to lure his protégé to the

Criterion Club for a quiet *tête-à-tête* dinner, the solicitor observed with kindly concern and significant earnestness, "You are right to work, but the right course may be carried too far. Don't overdo it, Otway. Take a hint from your backer, my boy, and *don't overdo it*."

While Albert Otway was thus eliciting anxious expostulations from Harold Cannick, Mr. Frederick Sharpwell, having made his *début* in a Court of Equity, was floating out into a considerable practice under favorable circumstances.

The public would do well to disabuse themselves of two prevalent misconceptions respecting the Bar and its members.

It is not true that every young lawyer who means to be a working barrister has his eye upon the wool-sack when he assumes the long robe and horse-hair wig. Though the attainment of the Great Seal is one of the brilliant possibilities of a career at the Bar, the junior who regards the "pestiferous lump of metal" as the proper guerdon of his worth is almost as exceptional a character as the boyish soldier of fortune who thinks that he will ultimately rise to be commander-in-chief of Her Majesty's forces. Frederick Sharpwell was one of the few greatly ambitious and supremely confident juniors of his time who regarded the highest honors of the Law as prizes for which they were naturally qualified to compete with the ablest men of their profession. But even he, with all his overweening self-sufficiency, did not feel secure of rising to the apex of legal grandeur. That he should soon come to the fore of Equity juniors, should wear "silk" before he was gray, and should do a good business among "leaders," were matters respecting which he had no misgiving. He was pleasantly certain that, life and health favoring him, a vice-chancellor's place would, sooner or later, come within his grasp. But when he thought of his chances of winning the first and brightest of all legal distinctions, his "aspirations" were checked by feelings remotely akin to modesty, and by a proper appreciation of all the disturbing influences that might retard, or finally stop, his march upon the wool-sack. Having no doubt that he was Erskine's equal in eloquence, and Brougham's peer in mental subtlety and vigor, he could not be sure of having their good fortune.

Nor is it true that the Bar is a profession in which no young man ever wins recognition and abundant employment, unless he has private introduction to the good-will of powerful solicitors. If there ever was such a time, the day has long passed when a youth of fluent speech and no knowledge of the law could talk himself into business. No doubt our four Inns contain middle-aged gentlemen who, notwithstanding their abundance of learning and personal capabilities for advocacy, are unknown and needy, through want of connections in the inferior department of the Law; while youthful barristers, of inferior style and endowments, are

being enriched by business that flows to them from their fathers and brothers and cousins. But in spite of all the facts which are fruitful of discouragement and failure to the long-robed outsiders of the Law List, the Bar still remains so far an open profession that it numbers some dozens of fortunate practitioners who found clients quickly, although they had no attorneys among their private friends, and no private access to the good-will of attorneys, when they first entered Westminster Hall and joined their circuits.

It is not wonderful that Frederick Sharpwell found business in his first term, and numerous clients in his first year. He had a presence that was effective and almost distinguished. In spite of the uppishness which made him enemies, his address was in some respects favorable to his ambition. It was eloquent of the self-confidence which ordinary people are apt to mistake for power. Its very flashiness and arrogance were likely to be mistaken by dullards for brilliance and dignity. His power of speaking was superior to average forensic eloquence. As a second wrangler and Fellow of Trinity, he had the academic credentials which solicitors of high standing always respect, and sometimes greatly overvalue. He was known to be a nephew of Sir Walter Mansfield, a vice-chancellor who took an amiable pleasure in supporting young advocates with expressions of critical approval; and it was rightly felt by solicitors that Mr. Sharpwell would receive no stinted share of the judge's benevolent consideration. Though Sir Walter was incapable of nepotism, or any kind of official unfairness, it was soon obvious that he was favorably disposed toward his young kinsman. Moreover, as it has been intimated in a previous chapter, Mr. Frederick Sharpwell had strong private supporters among solicitors of position; and though he could talk disdainfully of attorneys in the Criterion smoking-room, he exhibited a proper gratitude for the services rendered to him by the attorneys of his personal connection.

So Mr. Sharpwell had an excellent start in the legal race, and during his first year he did so much with it that some of his unfriendly critics were constrained to admit there was more in him than they had supposed. True it was that his principal briefs were winning briefs. But his side won; and he did his share of the winning in a style which justified solicitors in thinking he might be safely trusted in more difficult work. Instead of abusing with excessive loquacity his junior's privilege of speech—a privilege that gives the Equity junior so great an advantage over the Common Law junior—he put a curb on his tongue; and while he spoke with discreetness and moderation, he exhibited no little of the advocate's cleverness. At the same time, his business in chambers was considerable. Heavy papers came to his table, and it was rumored by his clients that he turned out his work in a masterly style. It was whispered in legal cliques that he gave promise of being

in time a sound "case lawyer." Having made up his mind that Mr. Sharpswell should be a failure at the Bar, it might be imagined that Mr. Cannick regarded with likely annoyance the success of the young man's opening terms. But Harold was neither surprised nor hurt.

"Pooh! his backers have not yet had time to find him out," said the senior partner of the Bedford Row house. "He is a showy fellow, and has strong friends, and he is now making the running that I predicted for him. But he'll soon begin to blunder and trip. Already he shows signs of running wild, from having had too much 'corn.' A year or so hence he'll lose his head, and make a fool of himself. Moreover, my 'new man' will be called this term, and he'll soon be giving that pert junior a lesson or two. Mr. Otway is 'Snibsworth's favorite pupil,' and the Eldonians say he is a deuced deal stronger in talk than Sharpswell."

A few days after Mr. Cannick had expressed these opinions at his own table to half a dozen of his brethren of the lower department of the law, Albert Otway was called to the Bar.

At Mr. Cannick's advice, Albert had, some months before his call, become the tenant, at a high rent, of a small set of ground-floor chambers in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn—three small rooms, which fortunately fell vacant at the right moment, and which Albert would not have succeeded in carrying off from half a score competitors for the three dingy little closets, had not a word been spoken in his behalf to the treasurer by the powerful solicitor. The staircase, at whose foot the set of chambers was placed, is the second staircase on the left hand of the Chancery Lane entrance of the Inn; and looking along one side of a triangle to the wall, built at right angles to the Lane side of the Old Square, Albert could see the windows of the ground-floor chambers which his adversary had taken on his call to the Bar. Again and again, during the interval between his entrance into his new quarters and his enrollment among learned counselors, Albert had observed his enemy pass to and fro between his rooms and the adjacent courts of Equity; and as often, on coming out of court with a pleasant consciousness of having made another step onward to success, Frederick Sharpswell had glanced at Albert's windows, in the hope that his antagonist might see him, with his hands full of papers, and his face radiant with satisfaction. More than once, also, Albert had witnessed one of Sharpswell's petty triumphs in his uncle's court; and remarked how, at the instant of his hottest exultation, the vain man looked round to catch his eye.

"Yes," Albert had muttered to himself on these occasions, "you have the start of me by time; but I will soon be abreast of you, and then we will see who is to take the lead."

Like Frederick Sharpswell, Albert was one of the very few fortunate young lawyers who walk straight from the students' tables of Lincoln's Inn into abundant employment. He would have been a lucky fellow had he received

from the Bedford Row firm only a quarter of the business that was sent him in his first year by Cannick, Bolt & Patterson. Harold Cannick was resolved that his "new man" should succeed rapidly and completely. The new man's rapid progress should not only justify his patron's choice of a *protégé*, but it should be a signal demonstration to the solicitors and bar of the Equity courts that, when Harold Cannick undertook to "make a man," he could make him quickly as well as surely. Not content with bringing Snibsworth's favorite pupil a fine junior's business from the big corner house of Bedford Row, Harold pulled, in his young friend's behalf, every cord and string of influence that connected Cannick, Bolt & Patterson with the general body of London solicitors. Triumphant at his own success before Albert's call, Mr. Sharpswell soon had the mortification of seeing his success rendered comparatively insignificant by the far more remarkable advancement of "that odious prig without a university degree," as Frederick was wont to describe his rival.

Wherever it came from—Chancery Lane or the Fields, City or West End, Birmingham or Liverpool—the "new man" was in nearly every cause of magnitude and public interest. The doings of the lucky junior were the gossip of legal circles; and, together with a few truths, many astounding fictions were uttered to account for his extraordinary success. He was Snibsworth's favorite pupil, and had been a clerk in a Lombard Street house, until Bolt, of Cannick, Bolt & Patterson, discovering his legal ability, had brought him into the law. He was Harold Cannick's nephew by marriage; he was the Duke of Dovercourt's illegitimate son, and had been introduced to the Bedford Row solicitors by his father. On one point all critics were agreed; he was a favorite pupil who did Snibsworth credit. Many envied the new man his extraordinary success; but no one said aloud that it was greater than his merits. Frederick Sharpswell's backers, however, did not fall away from him; and he went on making way, though it was exasperatingly obvious to him that, having in twelve months fallen behind Harold Cannick's pet, he would never come up with him in the quick running.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WAR TO THE KNIFE.

For a brief while the excitements of success made Albert comparatively unmindful of his old feud with the rival whom he was beating signally. But when he had been at the Bar some sixteen months, an event occurred which, deepening and intensifying his previous dislike of the man, added a passionate detestation to it.

"Otway, I want a word with you," said Harold Cannick, entering the barrister's chamber one afternoon shortly after the rising of the courts.

"Pray have it," was the reply. "It is about business?"

"Private business—no matter of law."

"Go on."

"In re the Criterion Club and your candidature."

"What has happened?"

"Enough to make me think that I had better withdraw your name from the candidates' list."

"Nonsense! Why, I am on for election or rejection next week. What has any one to say against me?"

"The election of new members is with the committee, to which, in spite of my endeavors to keep him out, Mr. Frederick Sharpwell was elected last month, as the spokesman of the 'young blood.'"

"Umph!" returned Albert, suddenly turning white with apprehension and anger. "And he objects to me?"

"Very decidedly. You see he is madly jealous of you. He hated you for half a hundred reasons before you were called to the Bar; and now your prodigious success in the profession has stimulated his old dislike of you into vindictive fury. He dislikes me also—for helping you; for opposing his election to the committee; and for putting him down rather roughly once or twice at the club. He has annoyed me lately at The Criterion in several matters. As soon as he saw that I was as much his enemy as your friend, he took to his insolent tricks; and, confound him, by thwarting and 'cheeking' me he makes some of the youngsters credit him with high spirit in treating a big solicitor so disdainfully. And now he is going to do us both an ill turn by keeping you out of the Club."

"Indeed! How will he accomplish that feat? He will scarcely induce the committee to reject me, unless he can say something worse against me than that he is jealous of my success, and does not relish my company. What course will he take?"

"I can tell you, for he spoke to me in the committee-room of The Criterion yesterday very frankly; but I had rather not repeat exactly what passed between us."

"Let me know exactly what he said."

"I will gratify you. But first let me say that he alluded to your father in no respectful terms. Now, am I to go on?"

"Yes," Albert answered, stoutly. "I must know all."

"It was just this. 'Mr. Cannick,' he began, 'so that you may have an opportunity of withdrawing your man, and preventing a discussion which might be injurious to him and painful to you, I think it right to tell you that, if you persist in your purpose of bringing Mr. Otway on for election at the next meeting of the committee, I shall resist his election strenuously.' 'On any ground besides that he is personally disagreeable to you?' I asked. 'Yes,' was his answer, 'on other grounds, which I shall

state precisely to the committee; and then, should there be need for it, I shall demand a ballot of the committee.' I observed, 'Perhaps you will let me hear your other grounds of objection to Mr. Otway?' Then came the information which I am reluctant to report to you."

Albert was greatly excited, though he concealed his vehement agitation, as he rejoined, in his customary voice, "Then came the information which I am most desirous to hear."

The solicitor continued:

"I dislike the man cordially," my gentleman went on, "but I should not, as The Criterion is a large club, feel justified in opposing his election on that ground. But when I tell you that his father was a fraudulent bankrupt, and embezzler of money, and a forger, I think I have said enough to satisfy you that it would not be advantageous for The Criterion to number Mr. Otway among its members. And, as committee-men, we are bound, in electing new members, to think only of the interests of the club." My reply was, "Mr. Sharpwell, you have made strong statements. I presume you make them on what seems to you the best authority?" "I speak on the best authority," he replied, "and you may rely on me that Otway's father was what I say. He only escaped a prosecution for felony by committing suicide." "Still, sir," I answered, "I must press you for your authorities for the extraordinary statements which you have made."

Again Harold Cannick paused.

While speaking the solicitor had refrained from looking at Albert's face, but, on pausing, he glanced at his companion's countenance, and saw that mental agony had covered the stern, stony features with beads of sweat.

"Go on. Give me his answer," Albert said, hoarsely.

"My reply," he answered, "will show you, Mr. Cannick, why I should prefer that this matter should be settled by your withdrawing Mr. Otway's name from the list of candidates. I am far from wishing that Mr. Otway's history should be discussed at a meeting of the committee; for, were it to come under their consideration, I should be constrained to confess myself a distant kinsman of the felon whose son would fain enter The Criterion on your arm. I am Mr. Otway's second cousin, and what I have told you about him I know, because I have the misfortune to be related to him. The gentleman is your intimate friend, and you will doubtless mention to him what has passed between us. Ask him whether I am the second cousin with whose immediate family he never held any intercourse, and whom he encountered for the first time in Lincoln's Inn Hall. If he should say yes, you will probably not care to press me for any further particulars of a painful and humiliating episode of my family history. If he should say no, ask me, Mr. Cannick, for the proofs of what I have stated, and you shall have conclusive proofs. Mr. Otway has sought to separate himself from his

paternal infamy by a few flimsy artifices. He has dropped one of his names, and he has exercised some ingenuity in disguising himself physically, but I know him to be my second cousin, and the son of a villain. No son of a thief and forger should enter the Criterion Club under any disguise of social success and false appearances.' To this I said, 'You have nothing to allege against Mr. Otway except his parentage?' 'Nothing,' was the answer. As I turned on my heel, I replied, 'I will think of this matter, Mr. Sharpswell. Probably I shall speak to my friend Otway about it; but, anyhow, I will let you know my intentions with respect to his candidature before the next meeting of the committee.'

Having finished a statement, which he made with painful effort, Harold Cannick drew a long breath, and exclaimed,

"There, Otway, now I have made a clean breast of it."

"And would like to know whether the man has told the truth."

"Rather say, I should like to know what we ought to do under the very unpleasant circumstances."

On one point Mr. Sharpswell has spoken the truth. He and I are second cousins. His parents and mine never had any intercourse. A family quarrel separated our grandparents for life, so that their children and grandchildren have lived as though they were in no degree related. I never set eyes on Frederick Sharpswell until I encountered him in Lincoln's Inn Hall, and then I detested him cordially before we had exchanged ten sentences. So far he tells the truth."

"Yes," said Harold Cannick, dryly, "I presumed that he spoke by the book. He would not have dared to tell an untruth, knowing my intimacy with you."

"On no point has he said to you any thing which he knew to be untrue. I must be just to him. He has not attempted to mislead you by any willful misstatement. But all the same for that, he has uttered things which are not true. Though he spoke on what may be called justifying authority, he altogether misstated my poor father's case, which—"

Quickly and hotly, Harold Cannick interposed.

"Not a single word, my dear Otway, about that; not a single word on that subject. I know as much of that matter as you could tell me. And for you to talk about it to me would only pain you, and perhaps disturb the course of our friendship."

"You know my father's story?" exclaimed Albert, with surprise.

Smiling at his companion's astonishment, the solicitor, dismissing his momentary fervor, answered,

"To be sure, I know it. I knew it from the commencement of our acquaintance. I can scarcely say I was one of your father's friends, but I had a slight personal knowledge of him;

and when he died, and there was a hubbub of indignation against him, I was one of the few persons who did him justice, and maintained that he was not so much a sinner as a culprit's victim. One reason why I decided to take you up—excuse the term, for you are growing so great a man that I mayn't presume to patronize you—one reason why I determined to serve you in the way of business, was my sympathy for your domestic trouble. My perception of the difficulties which your father's story would occasion you caused me to feel for you. There, there—I have never alluded to the ugly business. And I had hoped that nothing would ever compel me to allude to it."

Tears of grateful emotion rose in Albert's large dark eyes as he rose from his seat, and, grasping the solicitor's hand, exclaimed, almost hysterically,

"How nobly generous of you, and how very delicate! My dear friend, gratitude is no sufficient acknowledgment of such goodness and rare delicacy! By heavens, sir, I love you!"

"Hang your love, my boy," returned Harold Cannick, with an affectation of jauntiness, while the nervous force of his grip of Albert's hand betrayed that his feelings were deeply stirred, "I only want your good-will and work-a-day lasting friendship. —me! as I have no son of my own, why should not I amuse myself by playing the father to you? But mind me, Otway, if you go in for emotional extravagances and wild talk, I'll draw off from you, and instead of being your beneficent parent, I'll be your formal and very frigid uncle."

This jocular reproof had the desired effect on Albert, who in a few seconds recovered his customary coolness, and resuming his seat, looked once again much less like a gushing son than a hard-headed counsel holding a consultation with an important client.

"The question is, what shall we do?" the solicitor observed, in the hardest of matter-of-fact tones. "Your amiable second cousin has found you out, and means to bar the club door against you. He has no desire to publish his relationship to you, and will hold his tongue about your father's ugly business—at least he won't make a clamor about it—if you don't try to force your way into The Criterion in spite of his opposition. To some extent you are in his power. Anyhow, he could hurt you in the opinion of a few people. The disclosures which he threatens would certainly damage you with the solicitors at the present point of your career; though ten years hence, if all goes well, you may tell the world your whole story without fear for the consequences. Perhaps—"

Harold Cannick paused.

"You mean to say," said Albert, "that perhaps it would be better for me to refrain from fighting Mr. Sharpswell on his own ground."

"Precisely so."

"It is hard to be compelled to retire from any ground where he asks me to fight him."

"He does not ask you to fight him there.

On the contrary, he wishes you to keep away from him."

"That is true," said Albert, grateful for the remark which made it clear to him that, in relinquishing his candidature at *The Criterion*, he could not be charged with running from an adversary.

"You see," continued Harold Cannick, who felt strongly that Albert should withdraw from the coming election, "though I might succeed in fighting for you with the committee, Frederick Sharpswell would have blurted out facts which for the present had better be known to as few persons as possible; and you would enter the club under disadvantages which would render it impossible for you to enjoy the place. And it would be even a greater triumph to Sharpswell to see you badly received and cold-shouldered at the club, than it will be for him to know that he has shut the door against you."

"That consideration also occurred to me," returned Albert, to his companion's obvious satisfaction.

During the next three minutes Albert maintained silence, while he regarded all the several aspects of the case, and arrived at the conclusion that care for Harold Cannick's sensibilities, no less than regard for his own interests, required him to avoid the threatened conflict. Though the solicitor, with characteristic chivalry, had not hinted at the unpleasantness which the discussion in the committee-room would occasion him, or at the annoyance he would experience if his friend, after being brought into the club in the teeth of an angry opposition, should be found unacceptable to any considerable number of the members, Albert saw the possible discomforts, and shrunk from the thought of exposing his generous ally to them. It was obvious to him that for once he must yield to his enemy, and, turning from *The Criterion*, seek fellowship in another joint-stock palace.

"Be good enough to withdraw my name, Cannick, before the day of election," he said, slowly. After a brief pause he added, "Mr. Sharpswell will know the cause of my withdrawal. To that humiliation I must submit. But I will take an early opportunity of showing him that the prudence which occasions my retirement is altogether innocent of desire to conciliate him."

"That's well. Then I will scratch your name at once—better at once than on the very eve of election."

"You have my leave to do so."

"And now, my dear Otway, to dispose finally of an unpleasant subject, and place it among things never to be alluded to, let me say a few last words. In our conversation let no reference be ever made to your poor father's ugly story. In this respect, pursue to me the same course of jealous reticence that I have pursued toward you throughout our acquaintance."

"I will do so, Cannick. There are some subjects which reverence requires us to guard

with *altum silentium*. My dear father's trouble is one of them. We will never speak of it. But do say that you acquit me of cowardice, and natural proneness of deceit, in respect of the measures which I have taken to separate myself from my dear father's misfortunes."

"My dear Otway," Harold Cannick returned, with hearty emphasis, "had I been in your position I should have acted precisely as you have done. Respecting those measures of concealment, as well as every other part of your conduct known to me, you have my unqualified approbation. Now, good-bye. I must be off to an appointment."

Whereupon the portly, middle-aged solicitor withdrew his comely face and stalwart presence from the chamber in which Mr. Otway was accustomed to receive his clients and draw legal papers. And as the worthy gentleman walked away from Lincoln's Inn, he was as thoroughly certain as heretofore that Albert Otway was the son of Martin Otway, Esq., late of Cleve Lodge, Surrey. Let the reader of these pages bear this fact in mind. Nothing had passed between Mr. Cannick and Mr. Sharpswell, or between Mr. Cannick and Albert Otway, to inform the solicitor that Albert Otway was the son of John Guerdon, whilom banker of Boringdonshire. Not once in his recent conversation with Harold Cannick had Frederick Sharpswell mentioned his second cousin's original surname. It was true he had spoken of Albert as having dropped one of his names; a statement which Mr. Cannick had construed as referring to Reginald Albert Otway's relinquishment of his first Christian name. Knowing that Martin Otway's boy had been christened Reginald Albert, the solicitor had noticed that his *protégé* used only the second Christian name, and had attributed the apparent relinquishment of the Reginald to secretive policy. As for the other disguises to which Sharpswell had alluded, Mr. Cannick's close observation of his *protégé* had assured him that the young man dyed his hair and stained his skin. It had also occurred to the solicitor that Albert had adopted his closely-cut coiffure, on relinquishing the beard and mustache of his art-student days, in order that he should not be readily recognized by his old associates of Continental schools and the cliques of London Bohemia. Moreover, in his last interview with his *protégé*, neither John Guerdon's name, nor his place of residence, nor his occupation, had been mentioned. Harold Cannick knew that the banker of Hammerhampton had died insolvent, and under felonious disrepute; but he had never associated Albert with the luckless banker of the Great Yard. On the other hand, the solicitor knew that Martin Otway, Esq., late of Cleve Lodge, Richmond, had made away with public money, and committed suicide, just as certain spurious bills which he had uttered and could not meet were about to fall due; and events had taught Harold Cannick to regard Albert as the offspring of this delinquent of Cleve Lodge, Richmond. Lastly,

Mr. Cannick knew, as a matter of fact brought to his knowledge by a well-remembered piece of legal business, that the late Mr. Commissioner Sharpswell (Fred Sharpswell's father) and Martin Otway were first cousins. Under these circumstances, Harold Cannick naturally retained his erroneous impression respecting Albert's parentage.

Stranger still will it appear to the reader that, at the time of his recorded interview with Harold Cannick in the committee-room of the Criterion Club, Frederick Sharpswell had no notion that Albert was the son of John Guerdon, formerly of Earl's Court and Hammerhampton. Such, however, was the case.

A future chapter will give some exacter particulars of Mr. Sharpswell's pedigree. For the present, it is enough to say that, as the member of a bitterly-divided family, he had grown to manhood, having two second cousins, neither of whom was related to the other, and neither of whom he had ever seen. Albert the Bohemian was the one, and Albert the Bohemian's impersonator was the other of the two men to whom Frederick Sharpswell, by two perfectly different female descents, was a second cousin.

As for the Boringdonshire Guerdots, Mr. Sharpswell only knew of them as rather remote kindred, who had gone discreditably to grief and extinction. He had scarcely winced under the collapse of Guerdon & Scrivener's bank, for he had never held any familiar intercourse with his Boringdonshire relatives, and very few persons were aware of his relationship to the felonious banker. It was a slight relief to him when he, one day, heard at Cambridge that John Guerdon was beyond the reach of the law. He had not mourned for his second cousin, on hearing that Albert had followed his father to the next world, and that his body had been interred in Ewebridge church. On the contrary, he was rather pleased to know that the Guerdots were clean wiped from the earth's surface. Though distant and unknown, still they were his kinsmen; and it is often agreeable to know that one's unfortunate and discreditably kindred have been put underground.

Until their misfortunes rendered them infamous, his feelings for the Guerdots had been those of indifference. Having no reason to think that their continuance in this world was or could be hurtful to him, he did not want them to die off. His sentiments toward his cousins bearing the name of Otway had, however, been virulently hostile from his boyhood. Martin Otway had in early life defeated his first cousin (Fred's father) in a lawsuit. The beaten litigant (subsequently Mr. Commissioner Sharpswell) had been pleased to regard the lawsuit as iniquitous, and the victor in it as a robber. He trained his boy to abhor the robber and the robber's son; and Fred proved an apt pupil. Taught to believe in the abominable wickedness of the Otways as a matter affording no room for two opinions, Frederick Sharpswell conceived a desire to punish them as flagrant social

enemies. To bear the name of Otway was to be the object of his uncharitable suspicions; to be known to have a drop of Martin Otway's blood, as well as his surname, was to incur Mr. Sharpswell's rancorous abhorrence. On his way up to the mess in Lincoln's Inn Hall, where the reader first made his acquaintance, Frederick Sharpswell had learned from the steward that Albert was a Mr. Otway. On leaving the Hall on that occasion, Frederick Sharpswell had put some questions to the steward respecting the bearer of the odious name. The steward certified that Mr. Otway had recently joined the Inn, and was entered in the archives of the honorable society as the only son of Martin Otway, Esq., formerly of Cleve Lodge, Richmond. The antagonism, which quickly developed into a cordial hatred between the two young men, had its origin in discords of style, manner, temper, taste; but it would not have passed so quickly from mere dislike into implacable enmity, had it not been for Frederick Sharpswell's apparent discovery that Albert was one of the family against whom the young fellow of Trinity had been educated to cherish a Corsican hatred. In declaring to Mr. Cannick that he would avow his ignominious relationship to Albert before the whole committee, rather than allow him to enter the club, Mr. Sharpswell was actuated by domestic malevolence, rather than by jealousy of a rival. Much as he resented Albert's success, it would not by itself have inspired him to declare the young barrister unmeet for admission to The Criterion. But he could not allow unresistingly his club to be invaded by the detested Martin Otway's even more detestable son.

But while he was thus still mistaken for Martin Otway's son, both by his rival at the Bar and by his principal client, Albert Otway naturally imagined that his real parentage and story were known to the two men. To each of them he supposed himself known as Albert Guerdon, fighting his way at the Bar under an assumed name and false colors. Ignorant of Sharpswell's relationship to the dead Bohemian, it never occurred to him to suspect that his enemy had mistaken him for the man whose surname he had assumed.

He could not regret that he was known to Harold Cannick. Indeed, since the discovery had only strengthened Mr. Cannick's attachment to him, Albert was glad to be assured that the solicitor knew all which he appeared to know. For years Albert had been at times uneasy, under vivid apprehensions of the consequences which might ensue to his relations with his friend from an inauspicious revelation of his imposture. It was a grand relief to learn that his measures of concealment met with Harold Cannick's approval.

For Frederick Sharpswell's detection of his fraud, however, Albert could not be thankful. On the contrary, it wounded him acutely. It was obvious to him that his adversary, whom he had treated with courteous disdain, must de-

ride him as a cheat and impostor. To know that Sharpswell had denounced him scornfully as a felon's son was galling; but it was infuriating to feel that he had been detected in fraud by the object of his disdain. Perhaps Sharpswell, he thought, had not discovered the one direct lie of his deception. Possibly he was not aware of the false declaration of parentage. What if the man should discover it, and report it to the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn? For a few minutes Albert was alarmed by this last question. But on reflection, he was confident that even for so considerable an offense the benchers would not punish him with degradation from the Bar, or any open disgrace, now that he was an advocate who had made his mark in the courts, and been publicly complimented by two of the strongest Equity judges. Having regard to the circumstances which had driven him to make the false declaration, and to all the facts which could be alleged in palliation of his misdemeanor, Albert was secure of generous sympathy from the chiefs of his profession.

But though Sharpswell might not communicate his discoveries to the benchers, and would forbear to denounce him at the club, from whose list of candidates for admission his name would in another hour be withdrawn, it was not to be supposed that the bitter foe would refrain from using his knowledge to the injury of his victorious rival. Already he had imparted it to Harold Cannick, doubtless with a view to lower his kinsman in the solicitor's regard, as well as to shut him out from the club. The sneak would address other solicitors in the same way. He would tell the poignant story to the gossips of the law courts; and ere next long vacation it would be known in every legal clique of the town that the new junior at the Chancery bar was at best a *mauvais sujet*, of felonious parentage and false name.

Flushing with rage at this thought, Albert next imagined how, by a malicious use of incontestable facts, Sharpswell might in other ways stay his quick progress at the Bar, and even prevent him from achieving the grand purpose of his industry—the payment of his father's debts.

"The false-hearted sneak!" Albert muttered, in his wrath. "He called my father a rogue—'tis a lie! He called him a forger—another lie! He called him a self-murderer—a third lie! He hoped to rob me of my best client when he told those lies to Harold Cannick. And shall I allow him to stop my path and hinder me from accomplishing my sacred purpose to my father's memory, without trying to crush him? By heavens, he shall rue his rashness in crossing my path and stirring my resentment! My life must be one of labor for the dead. It may have no light or music of love. I must toil to the grave in loneliness. Success is no sufficient solace to the endurer of such a joyless existence. But though I

may never again love woman, I may hate, and fight, and grind to powder my enemy. The heart that is emptied of love has good room for hatred; and mine shall nurse an ever-growing detestation of the man who, though he has the blood of my ancestors in his veins, would ruin me. The man is a traitor to his kindred. My obligations to my father require me to crush Mr. Sharpswell. *And I will crush him!*"

It was a hard, fierce, merciless, devilish look that came to Albert Otway's stern and deeply lined face as he muttered these final words, "*And I will crush him.*" The passionate rage of his heart trembled on his lips and blazed in his eyes. Ere his excitement had subsided, and the expression had passed away, he rose from his seat, when, chancing to catch the reflection of his countenance in the little mirror over his fire-place, he exclaimed, with a short, bitter laugh,

"Ah, you devil, I know you; you are myself. You and I are one; and between us we'll drive that fellow Sharpswell to beggary and a lunatic asylum."

Half an hour later, as he was walking over the north pavement of Trafalgar Square, Albert Otway met Sharpswell, and gave him a look that said, "Now we understand one another. It is war to the knife, without quarter." Hitherto the two young men, notwithstanding their mutual hatred, had been accustomed to exchange insincere smiles and nods, after the fashion of well-bred gentlemen at feud. But their quarrel had now gone too far for the observance of conventional courtesies not demanded by the interests of their clients. For the first time since the birth of their mutual enmity, they passed one another in public without nodding carelessly. Frederick Sharpswell had seen the ferocious war-to-the-knife look just in time to save himself from rendering his enemy a hollow courtesy that would have met with no response.

"Humph! Mr. Albert Otway is no longer my fair cousin. He scowls ominously," thought Fred Sharpswell, as his lip curled into a sneer, and his eyes twinkled maliciously. "He has had a chat with the solicitor whom he has toadied for years with servile meanness. And he knows that, if he would enjoy the club life of gentlemen, he must sneak into some club where there is no one to recognize him as Martin Otway's son."

Albert saw the sneer and the malicious glance, and they infuriated him, for he had a humiliating sense of having come off second-best in the conflict of disdainful regards. While Albert's rage had shown itself ferociously and sullenly, Fred Sharpswell's malignity had assumed an appearance of exquisite enjoyment and good-temper. The constitutionally arrogant man was "on guard," and for once gave the habitually courteous man a lesson in the art of tormenting gracefully.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A BLOW IN RETURN.

A FORTNIGHT had barely elapsed since Albert gave that defiant look to his adversary in Trafalgar Square, when he had an opportunity of striking Mr. Sharpswell a blow in Sir Peter Mansfield's Court. The enemies were opposed to one another in the first hearing of the great, and still famous, case of *Hodgkinson vs. Walker*; Sharpswell being junior counsel for the plaintiff, and Albert junior for the defendant. Sharpswell had been unusually indiscreet and malignant. He had not mastered his case when he rose to his legs, after two eminent leaders who had done justice to their own reputation and their client's interests by singularly clear and dexterous arguments. Doing their best to withdraw from observation the strongest point for the defendant, these discreet leaders, while forbearing to say any thing that might call attention to their chief difficulty, had set forth the plaintiff's case with masterly force. It devolved on Mr. Sharpswell to commit a blunder which, though it was not really accountable for the defeat of his client, was made to appear the cause of his defeat. Presuming on his uncle's forbearance, he spoke at needless length, repeating arguments which his leaders had completely exhausted. Worse still, he occupied the attention of the court, during the last twenty minutes of his oration, with remarks that, without strengthening in any way the plaintiff's case, brought into clear view the particular difficulty which his leaders wished to keep out of sight.

Having come into court with the purpose of making play on this very point, Albert was delighted at his enemy's blunder. From the light in Sir Peter Mansfield's eyes, and the irritable twitching of his honor's lips, Albert saw that the judge was nettled by his nephew's indiscretion. Fortunately also for Mr. Otway, the defendant's leaders were incomparably inferior to the plaintiff's chief counsel, and failed to notice the important matter lying on the ground to which Frederick Sharpswell had imprudently led the critical watchers of the contention. To tell the truth, in his complete confidence in Albert Otway, and scarcely justifiable zeal for his interests, Harold Cannick (the defendant's solicitor) had selected the two weakest leaders of the court for association with his favorite junior. "My new man shall have a chance this time," Harold had said to himself. "No one shall be with him but those two old women, Disher, Q.C., and Bulpitt, Q.C. They will be sure to miss all the strong points, and leave a handsome play-ground for Otway."

Although his confidence in Otway was reasonable, it must be admitted that in this affair Harold Cannick went too far in the cause of friendship.

Regarded as "two old women in silk," Disher, Q.C., and Bulpitt, Q.C., acquitted themselves creditably. They were long-winded and prosy,

and wasted a prodigious amount of talk and time on points that should have been dismissed in a few sentences. But their conscientious wordiness was endured complacently by the judge, and caused two or three dull-witted solicitors to agree that "Disher and Bulpitt were safe leaders, who had not their due share of employment." Albert was thoroughly satisfied with his leaders. They spoke sufficiently on every aspect of the suit about which he did not want to say a word, and were quite silent on the one point which he wished them to leave entirely to himself.

At the close of the fourth day of the hearing, Mr. Otway had his opportunity, and used it excellently. His speech went directly to "the point." He would not weary his honor by repeating his leaders' arguments—an assurance that brought a grateful smile to the face of his honor, who was fatigued. He would, however, say a few words on a point that his leaders had kindly left to him—a way of accounting for the leaders' oversight which relieved them of the annoyance of an exposure, and caused them to aver, after the rising of the court, that Mr. Otway was a very sensible and gentleman-like young man, who could not fail to attain a first place at the Equity bar. It was a point—Albert continued without the slightest appearance of malice, as he gave his enemy a malicious stab—that had, of course, come under his honor's notice during the concluding part of the argument of the plaintiff's junior counsel. Albert made no further allusion to the junior counsel. He had done enough to make Harold Cannick's face radiant with malevolent happiness, and to bring scarlet anger into the countenance of Mr. Frederick Sharpswell. He had done enough to evoke a murmur of amusement, a noise sharper than a hum, and less audible than a titter, from the rows of stuff gowns. He had done enough to make Disher, Q.C., and Bulpitt, Q.C., aware that their very sensible and gentleman-like junior was up to some piece of mischief in which they had no share. Lastly, he had done enough to inspire Sir Peter Mansfield with transient contempt for his favorite nephew, and with a purpose to give that nephew a private avuncular wiggling at the earliest opportunity.

Having thus adroitly, and with a charming affectation of innocence, thrust a poisoned needle into his enemy's self-love, Mr. Otway held Sir Peter Mansfield's complete attention for some twenty-five minutes, during which short time he stated with precision and brevity his one point, and his conception of the legal principles applicable to it. Having done his work, he sat down without another reference to the blunderer in the fight. Sir Peter Mansfield reserved judgment; but before leaving the judicial seat, he observed that in arriving at his decision his mind would be greatly influenced by the considerations on which Mr. Otway had insisted with masterly discretion, in one of the most lawyer-like speeches that had come for

many a day from a junior member of the Bar. Again the sunshine of malevolent joy played in Harold Cannick's countenance, while Mr. Sharpswell's face once more turned scarlet. The judge's commendation of Albert's speech was not excessive. Snibsworth's "favorite pupil" had in fact delivered an exposition of law that caused Sir Peter to give judgment for the defendant a few days later, and made Hodgkinson *vs.* Walker a leading case, when Sir Peter's decision had been confirmed on appeal.

Albert had previously done more than enough to win the respect of Chancery lawyers. But his brief speech in Hodgkinson *vs.* Walker made him famous—not in general society, but in his profession. Though vast interests were affected by the suit, Hodgkinson *vs.* Walker was not of the class of cases which are described in the newspapers as "causes of great public interest." It had no moral resemblance to "The King *vs.* Baillie" (King's Bench), from which Erskine leaped at once into universal notoriety and enormous practice. It was more comparable with "Akroyd *vs.* Smithson," that made John Scott a personage among working lawyers, and set him on the high-road for the wool-sack. It is recorded of John Scott that when he went from Lord Thurlow's presence, after distinguishing himself in the last-named cause, he was stopped in Westminster Hall by "a respectable solicitor of the name of Forster," who said to the future Lord Eldon, "Young man, your bread-and-butter is cut for life." On returning to his chambers after his speech in Hodgkinson *vs.* Walker, Albert was greeted in similar spirit by a respectable solicitor of the name of Cannick.

"Bravo, my dear boy!" exclaimed Harold, shaking hands with his *protégé*; "you have walked clean out of the leading-strings. You have made your own game now, and won't want my help any longer. Your position is your own."

Returning his friend's warm grasp, Albert said, feelingly,

"And my best thanks to the friend who enabled me to make it."

"You have paid Mr. Frederick Sharpswell off handsomely, too, for keeping you out of The Criterion," the solicitor added. "He felt your stab all the more because you were so quiet and quick in doing it. What a furious fool the puppy looked!"

Smiling grimly, Albert answered, bitterly,

"It is not the last proof that Mr. Sharpswell shall have of the warm interest which he has caused me to take in him."

"If you go on as you have begun," returned Harold Cannick, "you'll drive him mad; you'll crush him, and grind him to powder!"

Albert drew breath before he answered with equal resoluteness and composure,

"And I mean to go on as I have begun. My second cousin has denounced me to you as a felon's son and an impostor. Good! I will

retaliate by proving him to be a noodle and pretender. I mean to crush him, and grind him to powder."

"You won't do that in a day," laughed Cannick.

"I should not wish to do it in a day. It will afford me more pleasure to do it slowly—steadily—surely. I mean to take my time about it."

Whereat Harold Cannick laughed cheerily, as he thought how surely and steadily his new man would gratify his inordinate vengeance. Like many men who are superbly loyal friends, Harold was an implacable and unscrupulous enemy. Frederick Sharpswell had not done very much to justify the solicitor's enmity. He had spoken insolently of attorneys as a class; he had borne himself arrogantly to Mr. Cannick on half a dozen occasions at The Criterion; and he had shut the club door against Harold's friend. Such offenses scarcely justified the solicitor's hatred of the offender. They do not account for it. Mr. Sharpswell's worst sin against Mr. Cannick was the overbearing air that caused so many persons to detest the young barrister ere ever he had done, or wished to do, them an injury.

For the present, Mr. Frederick Sharpswell did not feel himself likely to be crushed and ground to powder by any human force. The punishment inflicted on him by his rival had infuriated him. It was also distressing to him to know that Albert's speech in court, delivered to perhaps a hundred more or less critical auditors, would certainly establish his success, and would probably become an event in legal annals. But Mr. Sharpswell could take punishment stoutly, as well as inflict it mercilessly; and, in the course of a few hours—when he had taken a canter in the park with the dandies and belles of the London season, and had dined tranquilly at his favorite window of The Criterion—he was on sufficiently good terms with himself again. In fact, the worsted advocate was not without his consolations. If he had been thrown in a law-court, there was a court of another kind in which he was a suitor for a grand prize; and he had every reason to think that his suit would be successful. For several weeks he had been a happy lover; to-morrow he hoped to be a successful lover. Before the end of the next Long Vacation he intended to be the husband of a beautiful woman.

Having dined, and smoked a cigar, Mr. Sharpswell drove in a cab from St. James's Square to the Inner Temple, where he was the tenant of a luxuriously furnished set of residence-chambers.

An hour later, when he had made a leisurely toilet, he entered the same cab at the foot of his staircase, and drove briskly to Kensington Gore, where he was pledged to show himself at a grand ball given that night by Lady Mallow, the wife of Baron Mallow, of the Court of Exchequer.

CHAPTER XXV.

LOTTIE'S MARRIAGE.

THE possessor of a fine landed estate, that had come to him unexpectedly through several deaths, when he had fought his way to the judicial bench, Baron Mallow was much richer than the average of judges; and he lived superbly, as a rich man should. During the London season he received, at his large mansion in Kensington, a goodly proportion of the "best people" in town. Though nothing more than a puisne baron in Westminster Hall, he was a considerable personage in society. Lady Mallow, a woman of cleverness and taste, had made herself acceptable to gentlewomen of the highest fashion, who, though they were never reluctant to appear at her parties, could not have been easily coaxed into dining with an ordinary lord chancellor. While his wife thus enjoyed an exceptional position by virtue of her kindness and unusual tact, Baron Mallow was no less popular with men of various pursuits and social grades. From early manhood he had associated with painters, writers, and men of science; and, when he rose to wealth and judicial dignity, his house became a point of meeting for men who were fashionable without being celebrated, and men who were celebrated, but altogether unfashionable. It was to the credit of Sir Stephen and Lady Mallow that they liked to bring their acquaintances of different "sets" and social degrees together, and that it never occurred to them to regard the humblest of their decidedly miscellaneous acquaintance as unmeet company for their most aristocratic friends. Sir Stephen insisted that society, like punch, should be a mixture of many ingredients, and that he never enjoyed a dinner-party where there were no representatives of social circles in which he did not ordinarily move. As a mingler of "sets," he may perhaps have erred in the direction of audacity. When he brought Count D'Orsay, the Bishop of London, St. John Long the quack, and Brookfield the rope-dancer to the same table with a humanitarian duchess, a young actress from a Strand theatre, and the two Misses Okey, of mesmeric celebrity, he performed an exploit that, in the case of any other operator on the social forces, would have been thought scandalous. But in their special line Baron and Lady Mallow could do what they pleased. Persons who never saw princes anywhere else pushed against them at Lady Mallow's receptions; and folks of high blood and degree flocked to the lady's drawing-rooms because she knew such a lot of queer, amusing people whom they never met under any other entertainer's roof.

"Hours" being "earlier" some twenty years since than at this super-fashionable time, Lady Mallow's ball was at the height of festal brightness and gayety when, shortly before midnight, Mr. Frederick Sharpwell loitered through a series of crowded anterooms, exchanging words

and movements of courtesy with the numerous acquaintances whom he found among a majority of perfect strangers. He did not pause to gossip with any one in these anterooms, for the particular object of his sentimental regard was at that time in the large ball-room, where a military band, stationed on an orchestral dais, was making music for some three hundred waltzers, who had ample space to whirl round the musicians' platform, although it was placed in the very middle of the *salon*. Lady Mallow was justly proud of her vast dancing-room, which would have been almost as useless and embarrassing a present as a white elephant to any lady without an army of friends. Built out from the mansion, it covered no inconsiderable proportion of the surrounding garden, and perfectly destroyed the architectural symmetry of the house. But though an outward disfigurement to the judge's house, it was properly valued by his guests. Dancers could do themselves and their partners justice on its well-waxed floor. And guests, to whom dancing was a weariness and vanity, enjoyed the softly-padded settees, from which they watched the spectacle of the throng of people moving to and fro, under the brilliant lights, and between walls hung with noble paintings.

On entering the first of the drawing-rooms in which Lady Mallow received her guests, Frederick Sharpwell had been told where he would find the object of his search.

"You'll find Lottie in one of the corners at the north end of the ball-room," Lady Mallow whispered sympathetically to the young man, who had seen Miss Darling some three months before in the same house, and had fallen thoroughly in love with her.

Baron Mallow and Sir James Darling had been old friends at the Temple and on circuit; and until the latter had retired from London to Boringdonshire they had maintained a close intimacy. Nor did Sir James's withdrawal from town end their intercourse. The Baron of the Exchequer paid his old chum more than one short visit at Arleigh Manor; and he was familiar with the painful circumstances that had severed Lottie from Albert Guerdon, and made her opening womanhood a time of despair.

More than five years had passed since that severance, and Lottie had even laid aside the mourning which she wore for two years in dutiful sorrow for her dead mother, when Sir Francis Mallow suggested to her father that it would be well for her to pass the London season at Kensington, under Lady Mallow's guardianship. Time had taken the edge and sting from the troubles which had nearly brought her to the grave. Her spirits had revived, and her beauty, though changed and modified in some respects, had not been impaired by past suffering. Misfortune had neither embittered nor permanently crushed her. In respect to her person, she was a lovely creature, in the plenitude of womanly grace. Her nature had realized all the fair promise of her girlhood. She had also ar-

rived at that state of feeling which Albert had hoped would be her condition when for several years she should have believed him dead. Never again could she love another man with the fervor and richness of utter devotion that had distinguished her passion for Albert Guerdon; but her heart had powers that might express themselves in loyal attachment to a husband. She had recognized this fact—ay, more, her plans for the future were not without a hope that she might be a wife and mother. It would have been more agreeable to some of the more romantic readers of this narrative had she pined obstinately for her lost Albert, and died at an early age of consumption or a broken heart. But this story is less a romance than a record of real life, and Lottie Darling has been described truthfully as she was, rather than fancifully, as she might, or ought to, have been. Graciously fashioned and supremely lovely, she was still a thing of flesh and blood—a creature submissive to laws which required her to accommodate herself to circumstances. She had buried her past, but there was a future before her. Her retrospect was gloomy, but her prospect had sunshine as well as cloud.

So Lottie came to Kensington, and staid some months with a light-hearted hostess, who was resolved that the young woman committed to her care should not return to Boringdonshire without having received an eligible offer of marriage. Lady Mallow had loved Lottie for many a day. She believed that outside wedlock there was no real happiness for mature womankind, and, like all amiable and happy matrons, she delighted in match-making.

It was not surprising that, with this purpose for Lottie's good, Lady Mallow selected Fred Sharpswell as the young man for the occasion. He was well-looking, young, and prosperous. A second wrangler and Fellow of Trinity, he had already a good business at the Bar, and, as one of the three nephews of the childless Vice-chancellor Mansfield, it was understood that he would, at Sir Peter's death, come into the possession of a considerable fortune. Baron Mallow could certify that the late Mr. Commissioner Sharpswell had left his boy £12,000. Moreover, though his unfortunate manner to men made him unpopular with them, Frederick Sharpswell was a favorite with ladies. For them he had another manner, that was conciliatory and flattering. In his bearing toward women it was observable that his arrogance and uppishness were corrected by the vanity that made him thirst for feminine preference. He could not despise the creatures whose favor was a chief object of his ambition. Moreover, in justice to the better side of his nature, it must be admitted that the supercilious gentleman had a chivalric admiration for the gentleness, and a genuine belief in the goodness, of the *élite* of womankind.

Anyhow, under Lady Mallow's skillful management, he found favor with Miss Darling, who, having seen nothing but his finer qualities

and more gracious manner, was in no humor, toward the close of her Kensington visit, to rebel his significant advances.

Having surveyed the ball-room and brilliant throng with approval, Frederick Sharpswell passed the gaudily-clad musicians, and, avoiding the waltzers who whirled in quickly tripping couples over the floor, walked to the corner of the room where he saw his mistress sitting on a settee of amber satin, with a show of rich crimson drapery on the wall behind her. Two young ladies (not chosen for the dance) and a fourteen-year-old boy from Eton shared the settee with the lady, whose face brightened with gladness when Mr. Sharpswell came upon her unexpectedly, and begged that she would be his partner in the next quadrille.

They danced the quadrille, and then followed the line of flirting pairs, who passed from the ball-room into the adjacent conservatory, an enormous structure of glass and iron, and a white floor of polished marble, in which tropical plants of gigantic growth were arranged so as to afford the promenaders several darksome nooks for particular whisperings of love or folly. It was in one of these darksome recesses, athwart whose gloom the pure light of waxen tapers ran in a white stream, that Frederick Sharpswell put a momentous question to Miss Darling, when the strains of music for another dance had recalled the dancers to the ball-room. The question consisted of seven words, and, while Frederick spoke them, he pressed the lady's right hand with a nervous grasp. Miss Darling, having answered slowly, and with peculiar distinctness, "Yes, I will," Fred Sharpswell dropped his head quickly, and put a kiss on the hand which he had been squeezing barbarously. But, though the huge conservatory was deserted by all save those two, and no curious eye could observe their doings in the shaded corner, it was no place for demonstrations of love.

"Let us go back to the drawing-room," said Miss Darling. "And not another word to-night, Mr. Sharpswell, on this subject. I shall be at home to-morrow from three to seven."

So the matter was settled. Lottie had given herself to Albert's enemy.

It was no case for a long engagement. Frederick Sharpswell was rich enough to marry a portionless bride; but Miss Darling, instead of being fortuneless, had, on her mother's death, come into possession of the money secured to her by her mother's settlement; and she had further expectations from her father. Nor was it needful that the lovers should wait a year, and see whether time would dispose them to separate; for they were no boy and girl, who might be suspected of acting precipitately. Though still young, they were people of experience, who could be supposed to know their own minds. Their union, therefore, followed closely on their engagement.

But they were not married at Arleigh. Lottie was so far mindful of old joys and sorrows

that she could not endure the thought of being wedded to Frederick Sharpswell in the same little church where she had, in her girlhood, hoped to become Albert Guerdon's wife.

Having returned to Boringdonshire at the close of the gayest of the London months, and passed six weeks at Arleigh, in the society of her father and sister, and accepted suitor, she went up to town in the middle of the "dead season," and was married from Baron Mallow's house, without any notable pomp, at one of the Kensington churches. The bride and groom made their honey-moon tour in the Highlands of Scotland.

As Albert was in the north of Italy when Lottie's wedding took place at Kensington, it is not wonderful that he knew nothing of the event till several weeks had passed. The papers which announced the marriage escaped the notice of the Italian tourist, and when it was casually mentioned to him, in the ensuing Michaelmas term, that Sharpswell had married in the Long Vacation, he neither heard nor cared to inquire for the maiden name of the lady who had become his enemy's wife.

And in the December following Lottie's marriage, Albert one morning read in the *Times* a few closely printed lines, which caused him for many a day to believe that all his care for Lottie's restoration to happiness, and all his plottings for her ultimate joy in a married life, had been in vain. Printed among other brief notices of recent deaths, the announcement ran thus: "On the 16th inst., at Arleigh Manor, Boringdonshire, of consumption, in her 26th year, Charlotte Constance, daughter of Sir James Darling, Knt., Q.C., and Judge of the Boringdonshire County Court." Tears dimmed Albert's dark eyes ere they had come to the last words of this short paragraph, and when he had reperused the painful lines, he put the newspaper from him with a groan of anguish. He was alone in the parlor of his residence-chambers, and, in his unseen anguish, he sobbed convulsively. An hour later he was in court, looking something harder and sterner than usual, while he attentively noted the arguments of a cause in which Frederick Sharpswell was his opponent.

Had it not been for the carelessness of a compositor in Printing-house Square, who inverted the type of the figure 9, so as to give it the appearance of the numeral 6, and then misplaced the two Christian names of the dead lady, Albert would have known that the Miss Darling of the announcement had died in her 29th year, and that, instead of being Charlotte Constance, she had been Sir James Darling's daughter, Constance Charlotte. He would have seen that the notice declared the death of the elder of the two sisters—the woman of unhappy temper, who, bearing in a different order the same names as her sister, was known in the family circle as "Connie." The typical error having given the younger sister's precise age, and also *her* names in their proper order, Al-

bert naturally accepted the lines as an authorized and correct announcement of Lottie's death. And years passed over his head ere he discovered his mistake. For years, while he regarded her as her mother's companion in heaven, she was living in Morpeth Place, Eaton Square, the wife of the man whom he was bent on crushing and grinding to powder. But, had no printer's error ever occasioned him this sorrowful misconception, he would not have discovered any the sooner that Lottie Darling had become Mrs. Frederick Sharpswell.

The belief that Lottie was dead had a hurtful effect on Albert's spirits, temper, and heart. By depriving him of the chief consolation that had hitherto qualified his wretchedness since his severance from her, it gave additional sternness and cruelty to his fate. He could no longer hope for her happiness, or persuade himself that he had taken the best course to compass it. Since his retreat from Boringdonshire he had been a man of solitary and joyless toils; he had imagined himself to have tasted the bitterest sorrows of desolation; but it was not till he had been assured of Lottie's death that he knew, in the fullest sense of the words, the woe of utter loneliness.

He could no longer live or suffer for her. She had gone before. Henceforth, to labor for his father's memory must be his one business. In accomplishing that business he must work without the encouragement of feeling that she would rejoice in his final victory.

Is it wonderful that the wretched man, numbed and broken in his gentler affections, and bereft of the power of loving, sought comfort in an extravagant indulgence of his hatred of the one man who would fain, as it appeared, hinder him from achieving his enterprise of filial devotion?

Hate is a plant that flourishes more quickly, and reaches a vaster growth, in the rich soil of a generous heart than in the thin sand of a servile, or the heavy clay of a brutal, nature. The same natural conditions that are most fertile of love may become especially productive of enmity. This is a puzzling fact. And it would be even more terrifying than perplexing, were it not true that, in generous natures, hatred may perish utterly at any moment of happy influences, and leave no trace of its baneful existence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MY HUSBAND'S ENEMY.

HIMSELF greatly influenced by appearances, Frederick Sharpswell was just the man to overrate their influence on others. From policy, no less than love of ostentation, he decided to begin his married life with a show of greater prosperity than his means justified. Instead of housing himself on Notting Hill, or in Westbourne Park, or in some other modest suburb in favor with struggling juniors of the Bar, he

took a house almost large enough to be called a mansion, in one of the best quarters of the West End. A Q.C. with a large practice would have been suitably established in No. 2 Morpeth Place, Eaton Square, which Mr. Sharpswell selected for his residence, in spite of Sir Peter Mansfield's expostulations with his nephew on the extravagance of his arrangements. Frederick flattered himself that he showed manly spirit and independence in disregarding his uncle's advice on this point. Sir Peter took a different view of the young man's conduct, and, for the first time since he had made a will equally favorable to his three nephews, debated whether he should not leave the bulk of his property to his brother's sons, and only bequeath his sister's boy a handsome complimentary legacy. Frederick had fallen greatly in his uncle's esteem since his misadventure in *Hodgkinson vs. Walker*.

Having taken No. 2 Morpeth Place, Sharpswell furnished it handsomely. He was no man to pick up cheap lots of brave furniture at auctions. Mr. Rigdon, the upholsterer of Regent Street, made a large bill, and proportionate profit, out of the young barrister's general instructions; and when No. 2 had been fitted from basement to garret at a needless cost, Mr. Sharpswell expended, with some discretion, many hundreds of pounds on works of art for the adornment of his rooms of reception. Such was the home which Lottie entered as mistress, on her return from the Scotch Highlands. Of course she had her carriage. Sir Peter was of opinion that a modest brougham, drawn by a single horse, would be an appropriate equipage for the bride who had brought her husband no large fortune, and was only the daughter of a county court judge. But on this point also the uncle and nephew differed; and Lottie returned her bridal calls in a showy barouche that rolled at the heels of a pair of bay steeds. Had she known how far her husband's scale of expenditure was beyond his present income, Mrs. Sharpswell would have insisted on having such a carriage as Sir Peter Mansfield recommended. But she took it as a matter of course that her husband could afford to do what he did. And observing that she evinced no disapprobation of his nephew's proceedings, Sir Peter Mansfield did her the egregious injustice of thinking that she delighted in display, and encouraged her husband in extravagance. Nor did he survive this ridiculous misconception of his niece's character. To the last the vice-chancellor misunderstood her, and disliked her as much as it was possible for an intelligent gentleman to dislike so gentle and winning a creature.

Though Mr. Sharpswell received no adequate reward for all this costly ostentation, it was not altogether without the effect which it was intended to produce. It gave the young couple an undefinable social status to which they were not entitled; and it created the desired impression on the eight or ten solicitors whom, in spite of his secret contempt for lawyers of the subor-

dinate class, Mr. Sharpswell asked to his dinner-parties because they were good clients.

And for several years the mistress of No. 2 Morpeth Place was a fairly happy woman. She loved her husband, who was very proud of her, and never failed in chivalric submission to her pleasure. But, though she was not aware of it, she loved him less vehemently than she loved her children, the four girls who came to her arms in the first seven years of her married life.

It has been remarked by some novelist or essayist that young married gentlewomen, of the good and happy kind, may be divided into two classes—the "wives" and the "mothers;" i. e., the youthful matrons who, while caring properly for their offspring, think more of their husbands than their babes; and the youthful matrons who, though they are conscientious observers of their nuptial vows, prefer the prattle of their children to the wise talk of their lords. In that she found more pleasure in her nursery than in Frederick's study, Mrs. Sharpswell was unquestionably a "mother" rather than a "wife." Had she married Albert Guerdon in her joyous girlhood, she would have been one of "the wives;" but marrying a second love, after endurance of much sorrow, she naturally belonged to the "mothers." And her case affords the explanation of the moral and sentimental difference of these two species of virtuous and fortunate womankind. When a good woman is seen to care more for her husband than her children, it may be safely inferred that he was her first love. On the other hand, of the woman who, loving her husband much, loves her offspring more, it may be no less confidently declared that she did not give herself to her spouse until she had expended the finest force of her virginal affections on another man.

Lottie was a passionately loving—ay, an absurdly doting mother, to her four large-eyed, lovely girls. And to her husband's credit it may be told that he was never jealous of the children, though he knew well that Lottie cared more for them than for him. Like many men who are overbearing and disagreeable out-of-doors, Frederick Sharpswell was a model of good temper and affectionateness under his own roof. He was pleasant and considerate even to his servants in Morpeth Place; though his Lincoln's Inn clerk was justified in describing him to certain members of the *Convivial Scriveners' Free-and-easy*, as "the most soopersellious and aggravating snake in the whole Law List."

Lottie had been married some sixteen months, when she had a memorable conversation with her husband about Mr. Albert Otway.

As the wife of a working barrister, Mrs. Sharpswell naturally took an interest in the proceedings of the courts in which her husband practiced. She liked to know something of the causes that were alluded to at legal dinner-parties. She never took up the *Times* without glancing at the Law Reports, to see if Fred-

erick's name appeared in them. It followed that she became familiar with the names of Equity barristers whom she did not meet in society, and that her eye was often arrested in her daily newspaper by the name of Otway. Could it be the same Mr. Otway who was Albert Guerdon's friend? On referring to the Law List, she found an Albert, but not a Reginald Albert Otway, in the catalogue of counsel. Without speaking to Frederick on the matter, she ascertained that the Mr. Otway, mentioned almost daily in the journals, was an Albert. Perhaps he had relinquished his longer Christian name, and was the same Reginald Albert who had written to her mother at the time of Albert Guerdon's death, and had followed her once dear—her still dear—Albert to the grave in Ewebridge church.

More than once she had checked herself as she was on the point of speaking to Fred about Mr. Otway. She had never mentioned Albert Guerdon's name to her husband, or even hinted to Fred that she had loved another before she loved him. And having married Lottie when she was twenty-five years old, Frederick had, with proper delicacy, refrained from cross-examining her as to her possible love-affairs in times prior to their acquaintance. Naturally she shrunk from touching, in her confidences with him, on any subject that could lead him to pry into her buried life. But at last the time came when a growing curiosity impelled her to talk to him about Mr. Otway.

Putting down the *Times*, which she had been conning in her boudoir one evening, and speaking in a low voice that would not disturb baby, sleeping tranquilly in an adjacent *berceau*nette, Mr. Sharpswell said,

"Mr. Otway must have a large practice, Fred. His name is in the *Times* day after day."

"Yes, he is getting a large business," Frederick replied, his countenance assuming a look which informed Mrs. Sharpswell that her husband harbored animosity against Mr. Otway.

"Is he clever?"

"No doubt. No man can arrive at his position at the Bar in some three years without being clever."

"Did he take high honors at Oxford or Cambridge?"

"Pooh! he picked up whatever culture he has at Bonn, Heidelberg, and such places."

"Indeed!" rejoined Lottie, remembering that Albert Guerdon had been educated at Bonn, Heidelberg, and such places, and that Mr. Reginald Albert Otway had been his fellow-student.

After a pause she added, "Some years since I saw a Mr. Otway—only once—in Boringdonshire. I wonder if he is the Mr. Otway of your Bar? Describe Mr. Otway to me."

Mr. Sharpswell answered, contemptuously, "My Mr. Otway! The fellow is no ally of mine. As for his appearance, he is a hard-featured, closely-cropped, closely-shaven prig, with

reddish hair, a peculiar brownish-red complexion, long downward lines in his face, and a pair of dark eyes—notably dark for a man with light hair—that, when he is angry, blaze out from beneath a pair of straight, shelving eyebrows."

In every particular the description corresponded with Mrs. Sharpswell's recollection of Albert Guerdon's friend.

"He is rather above the middle height, well-made, and strongly built for a slight man."

"He must be the same gentleman who was in Boringdonshire."

"Where did you meet him?" Frederick inquired.

A slight blush rose in Mrs. Sharpswell's face as she answered, evasively, "At Ewebridge—a parish near Arleigh, at a rather large gathering of people. I remember that I exchanged a few words with him."

Fortunately the answer satisfied Mr. Sharpswell's curiosity.

"By-the-way," Lottie added, with an air of indifference, "his name was Reginald Albert Otway."

"So is this man's—only he has dropped the Reginald. Doubtless he is the fellow you remember."

"How strange of him to drop one of his names!"

"Not at all. It's a common dodge with men of disreputable antecedents, who wish to separate themselves from past disgrace. Otway's father, Martin Otway, was a cheat, rogue, swindler, forger; and Mr. Otway dropped his first Christian name, so that he should be the less readily recognized as the son of a villain."

"How strange!"

Remembering how John Guerdon, in whose innocence and honor she thoroughly believed, was charged unjustly with the same offenses, Mrs. Sharpswell added, pitifully, "Perhaps the poor man—Mr. Otway's father, I mean—was not so bad as the world says?"

"He was every whit as bad—ay, and worse," returned Mr. Sharpswell, angrily, raising his voice in his excitement.

"I am sorry to hear it. But don't speak so loudly, Fred—you'll wake baby."

Lowering his voice, out of respect for baby's slumber, Mr. Sharpswell rejoined,

"As you'll be sure to find it out, sooner or later, Lottie, I may as well tell you at once. Otway and I are second cousins, and deadly enemies. I hate him just as my father hated his father. We are kinsmen at feud, after the Corsican fashion. He hates me with an implacable hatred."

"Atrocious man!" ejaculated Lottie, in a louder key.

"His chief aim," returned Mr. Sharpswell, lowering his voice to a tone that rendered his words peculiarly impressive and terrifying to his companion, "is to injure me in my profession. If he could, he would ruin and beggar us! If he could, he would so reduce us that your babe

there, on growing to a woman, should have to work with the needle for her bread."

"Abominable wretch!" cried Mrs. Sharpswell, in a still higher tone of abhorrence, that brought a sudden sharp screech from the *berceauette*.

With wifely injustice, Mrs. Sharpswell exclaimed, "There, Fred, you *have* waked baby!" as she rose quickly and ran to her darling. And, with proper marital submissiveness, Mr. Sharpswell said, "Pon my honor, Lottie, I beg your pardon for making such a noise!"

Baby having thus abruptly broken the conversation, it was not renewed on that evening.

But Frederick Sharpswell took an early opportunity to justify his hatred of Albert Otway to his wife, by revealing to her all the iniquities of Martin Otway and his son. He told her about the bitter quarrel between his father and Albert's father in such a way that she regarded the late Martin Otway as the falsest, wickedest, and most vindictive knave that ever lived. As for Otway the son, Fred proved to Lottie that the man was a prodigy of evil and contemptible qualities, which were all the more odious and dangerous because they were allied with remarkable cleverness. He had, in the first instance, gained a large practice through attorneys, whom he had toadied meanly during his student's career at Lincoln's Inn. A sycophant to solicitors, he was an unscrupulous advocate, and utterly regardless of honor and decency in the measures which he employed to gratify his vengeance against Lottie's husband. Mr. Sharpswell sincerely believed the statements which he thus made to Albert's discredit. He had thoroughly persuaded himself that his rival was a monstrous rascal. The picture of a man, drawn by his bitter enemy, is never a flattering, and seldom a truthful portrait.

For a while Lottie experienced a tender sadness in knowing that Albert Guerdon's friend was such a wicked man. But soon her sadness lost its tenderness, and became the vehement animosity of a loyal partisan. In her sympathy with, and faith in her husband, she adopted wholly his repulsive account of Mr. Otway's evil nature. If she did not except the wicked man from her prayers for her enemies, she at least gave him, in her mind, a very unflattering prominence among those disturbers of her happiness. So far as she was capable of hatred, she detested the man who hindered her husband's advancement, and strove to injure her little girls. When she read in the *Legal Intelligence* the judgment of a cause in which Mr. Otway had been concerned on the winning side, and her husband had been a counsel on the losing side, she gave vent to her chagrin and irritation in a bitter sigh.

Having once conversed freely about Mr. Otway, she and Fred often recurred to the subject; and in hours of anxious solitude, the wife and mother shed many a tear over imaginary evils that might possibly ensue to Fred and her children from their enemy's malignity. Is it

wonderful that, in the course of years, when the enemy had dealt, and was continuing to deliver blow after blow against her husband's peace of mind, she could scarcely refrain from shuddering at the sight in print or the sound of this Otway's execrable name? In one of his "Happy Thoughts" *Punch* described Mr. Disraeli's amusement at discovering that Lady Beaconsfield's wifely zeal had made her regard Mr. Gladstone as a monster of badness. The man whose open and relentless adversary has a loving wife may rest assured that the world contains at least one woman to whom he is detestable.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CRUSHED AND GROUND TO POWDER.

Two gentlemen-at-feud—let us say two rival doctors—who live in the market-square of a provincial town, in houses so placed that neither of the enemies can look out of his dining-room windows without seeing the dining-room windows of the other, may be said to exist under circumstances unfavorable to their chances of reconciliation. When A wins a patient from B, the latter knows it almost before the former has taken his first fee from his new employer. If some of B's acquaintances go to Mrs. A's evening-party, B sees their carriages before his enemy's door, and feels that the fidelity of his friends is being undermined by the foe. At church A and B scowl at each other from opposite pews, and sing one another down from hymn-books that they would fain use as missiles of warfare. The obstinacy of rural quarrels is proverbial.

Albert Otway and Frederick Sharpswell lived like our two householders in the same provincial market-square, under circumstances that kept the fury of their mutual hatred at white heat. Occupants of chambers looking into the same small yard, and practitioners in the same courts of law, they were perpetually jostling against and wrangling with each other, to the infinite amusement of the majority of the watchers of their feud. The few good-natured members of the Equity Bar thought it a pity that two such clever fellows could not come to a friendly understanding. But the many mischievous gentlemen of the same profession were of opinion that the never abating fight of Otway *vs.* Sharpswell contributed to the liveliness of Lincoln's Inn, and was not at all indecent, as the antagonists, avoiding Old Bailey rudeness, worried each other in a gentleman-like style. The antagonism of the two men was notorious in legal circles, and it was utilized by solicitors who, in pitting the eminent juniors against each other, regarded the mutual enmity as a spur incessantly pricking the flank of either animal. It was observed that Mr. Otway was never so vigilant in watching, or strong in speaking, as in cases where he was opposed to Mr. Sharpswell. In like manner, it was allowed that Mr. Sharpswell

well seldom failed to "do all he knew" when Mr. Otway was on the "other side."

Had Frederick Sharpswell got the upper hand of his rival, he would have been unbearably insolent toward all men; but under his foe's sharp discipline—which may be described as a snubbing once a week, and a terrible thrashing once a month—Mr. Sharpswell learned that he was not every body, and improved so greatly in his general demeanor that he lost his old reputation of being the most disagreeable man at the Bar. The more he felt Albert's strength, and recognized his own weakness, the more was he desirous of sympathy and social support. But fairly mastered, Mr. Sharpswell was not ignominiously beaten out of the field by his rival until they had both taken "silk."

Older in forensic standing than his foe by several terms, Sharpswell was also the first of the two to become a Q.C. His junior's business had been steadily decreasing for three years, when he applied for silk, and, getting it, made choice of the Rolls Court as the scene of his future triumphs. He had grown so weary of his uncle's criticisms that he determined not to lead in his court, where he would be under Sir Peter Mansfield's observations. To some of his friends he remarked superciliously that it would never do for him to lead in the court of "a man" who might be suspected of favoring him from private considerations; an imprudent speech, which, on being reported to the "man," caused him to carry out a long meditated design with respect to his property.

Nine months after he had taken "silk" Mr. Sharpswell lost his uncle, and was disappointed in his hope of being greatly enriched by the veteran's death. Dividing his considerable property between his brother's two sons, Sir Peter left his sister's boy, Fred Sharpswell, only a legacy of £10,000. This was a prodigious disappointment to Lottie's husband, who had hoped to get five times that amount from his uncle, and had expended a large proportion of his small patrimony in maintaining an expenditure that exceeded his income by several hundreds a year. About the same time he was inadequately consoled for this grievous misadventure by the coming in of £5000 at the death of Sir James Darling; but this sum, as part of the property secured to Lottie, passed into the hands of her trustees. At the close of his first year in silk, Mr. Sharpswell had, in addition to his professional earnings, just £15,000 besides the income derived from the small fortune settled on his wife. Up to that point of his career he had not done well. But the world believed him to have done better. And his spirit, though tamed, was still unbroken. He would win a vice-chancellor's place in spite of Albert Otway, or a score such prigs.

While Mr. Sharpswell's success had been so unsubstantial as to be near akin to failure, Albert Otway had been making a fine yearly income, and saving about three-fourths of it. Mr. Cannick's *protégé* had never made the mistake

of living stingily, in order that he might grow rich a little faster. On the contrary, he had the luxuries and pleasures of a prosperous gentleman. Excluded from *The Criterion*, he became a member of *The Legislative*, and at that well-reputed club entertained his friends with suitable liberality. His residence-chambers in the Inner Temple were equal to his success, and he was one of the best-mounted riders of "the Row." In the Long Vacations he made Continental trips; but while living without parsimony, he laid by from each year's earnings much more than he spent; and knowing from his early training how to invest his savings at high interest, as well as on good security, he became rich with a quickness that, to some readers of this page, may appear incredible. On the completion of his tenth year at the Bar, he was in a position to pay his father's clients, or their representatives, every penny that they had lost from the failure of Guerdon & Scrivener's bank, interest as well as principal. Mindful of Harold Cannick's desire that they should never mention a certain "ugly story" to one another, Mr. Otway neither employed his friend to negotiate with Guerdon & Scrivener's unsatisfied creditors, nor spoke to him of the steps he was taking to relieve John Guerdon's memory of dishonor. The barrister's agent in this business was Mr. Broadbent, of the firm of Broadbent & Greenacre, Walbrook, City, a solicitor whose acquaintance Albert had made at Harold Cannick's house. Men can usually be found without much trouble by the seeker who only wants to pay them money. Having obtained from the proper official source certain particulars of the liquidation of Guerdon & Scrivener's estate, Mr. Broadbent had no great difficulty in discovering the banker's creditors, and inducing them to take with interest the unpaid balance of their old claims on the bank. Of course Mr. Broadbent's proceedings caused surprise and talk in the "Great Yard," and all the more because the good folk in Boringdonshire were left in ignorance of the person who, after a lapse of some fourteen years since the failure and subsequent death of John Guerdon's only child, exhibited such concern for the banker's memory. A rumor went about Boringdonshire that Scrivener had become a prodigious capitalist in the United States, and, growing honest in his old age, had indemnified the sufferers from his rascality; but this rumor was discountenanced by the fact that, while paying every pecuniary claim for which the late John Guerdon's representatives could be deemed responsible in honor, Mr. Broadbent paid none of Scrivener's individual liabilities.

Having paid off all the creditors of the fallen bank, and indemnified to the uttermost farthing Messrs. Pittock & Murphy, King William Street, City, for the loss which they had sustained by discounting the forged acceptance that John Guerdon had indorsed, Albert had still in hand several thousands of pounds toward the accomplishment of his next, and so far as his father's

honor was concerned, final pecuniary undertaking—the restitution of Blanche Heathcote's fortune.

Few months had passed since Albert surveyed with satisfaction the collection of receipts which Mr. Broadbent put into his hands on returning from his last visit to the Great Yard, when, at an evil hour of a period fertile in bubble companies, Frederick Sharpswell was induced to invest £10,000 in the shares of the Royal Alliance Bank. A joint-stock bank, the Royal Alliance was established to compete with the London and Westminster, which, under skillful management, had already attained the strength and vast credit that it still possesses in the commercial world. Started by sanguine men, who had some name and influence among financiers, the new bank was regarded favorably by many persons of sagacity. Sanguine in all his undertakings, Mr. Sharpswell had no doubt that it would succeed, and pay him thirty per cent. on his invested capital. Having become a share-holder, he was persuaded to act as one of the directors of the concern. The projectors were of opinion that the Q.C.'s name in the list of managers would gain the bank confidence in legal circles.

At the outset of its brief career the Royal Alliance had the appearance of prosperity. Lottie was delighted by her husband's assurances that they were at last on the high-road to wealth. And while he congratulated himself on his relations with the new bank, Mr. Sharpswell was satisfied with his professional doings. The new silk gownman of the Equity Bar had been well supported by his personal connection of solicitors; and on the close of his first year in silk, he could tell Lottie that, instead of falling below, the years' earnings had exceeded the average of his previous eight years' professional winnings. He would soon be in Parliament, and competing for the office of Solicitor-general.

A few months later, Frederick Sharpswell was not surprised to hear that Albert Otway would be one of the next batch of silk-gownsmen; but he drew a long face when he saw Albert enter the Rolls Court in his new silk gown. It was ominous of mischief that the enemy, instead of choosing one of the other Courts, had selected the Rolls.

As leaders in the Rolls, the two men renewed the long, bitter fight which they had fought in their relinquished stuff-gowns. Again, solicitors pitted the combatants against each other; but not many terms passed before it was obvious that the one, who had been the better junior, was by far the stronger leader. In truth, Frederick Sharpswell soon received so many falls from the man with whom he again wrestled, that his backers lost heart and faith in him. Some of the solicitors, who had been his staunchest supporters from the day of his call, left him in disgust, and gave their briefs to his victor.

Nor was the Rolls the only arena in which

Frederick was met and beaten by his antagonist. Some of the electors of Swanbeach having invited him to represent them on Liberal Conservative principles in Parliament, he accepted the invitation, and running down to the borough, was received there in a way which made him regard the seat as won. The London papers announced that he would be returned without a contest. But the papers were wrong. Harold Cannick was a close ally of a Parliamentary agent, who knew "all about the borough," and assured his friend that a very moderate Liberal might beat the Liberal Conservative by a narrow majority. Harold Cannick carried the news to Albert; and on the very evening of the nomination day, it was announced in the *Globe* that at the last moment a Liberal candidate had appeared in the field at Swanbeach. Mrs. Sharpswell had scarcely perused a telegram, bearing the words, "All right," from her absent husband, when, taking up the evening paper, she read, "An eminent Chancery barrister has gone to Swanbeach, to contest the borough with Mr. Sharpswell, Q.C." Her face turned white with fear, and then scarlet with indignation, as she asked herself, "Can the eminent barrister be that odious, abominable Mr. Otway?" The following morning answered this question in the affirmative. Three days later, Mrs. Sharpswell had the pain of knowing that Mr. Otway was a member of Parliament, having beaten her husband at the election by only six votes. Though she received her husband, on his return from Swanbeach, with a smiling face, poor Lottie had secretly shed many bitter tears over the result of the contest.

A year later, Frederick Sharpswell, who was extremely desirous to enter Parliament, offered his services to the electors of Marchborough, a larger and much more important constituency than Swanbeach; and after a vehement battle with two other competitors for the vacant seat, he found himself at the top of the poll. At last he was in Parliament. "Now, Lottie," he exclaimed, when he had kissed her in the drawing-room of No. 2 Morpeth Place, immediately after his triumphant return to town, "I am on my way to the 'Lords.'" Poor fellow! and poor Lottie! He had barely entered the House of Commons, when a petition was presented against his return, on allegations of flagrant bribery.

"Dear, dear Frederick, you *have* not bribed? you have not done any thing so wicked!" Lottie exclaimed, anxiously and indignantly, when she received this intelligence from her lord's lips. "How cruel it is that such a charge should be brought against you!"

Fred turned pale, and for a moment was abashed.

"Wicked, my dear," he stammered; "what do you mean? They all do it."

And then he explained to her that, though bribery and corruption had an ugly sound, they signified nothing heinous when used in a pure-

ly Parliamentary sense, but merely pointed to certain pecuniary and almost constitutional processes by which majorities were always determined at contested elections.

"Since all the candidates bribe equally," he observed, "corrupt influence, as it is rather absurdly termed, does no practical harm, except to the pockets of the candidates. Deduct from each of the three returns at Marchborough its hundred or so bought votes, the positions of the candidates would be just the same. Hence no honest voter is injured by the inconvenient system. Nor does the system tend to misrepresent the wishes of a constituency. If a candidate were, through niggardliness, to refrain from bribery, like his opponents, he would be only giving them an unfair advantage, and occasion a misrepresentation of the popular will. He would, in fact, be wanting in loyalty to his party. Of course the system is bad, and sometimes works unjustly, when unscrupulous adversaries succeed in unseating a member for his bribery, who has only bribed like his opponents."

Though she was comforted by this assurance that "they all did it," Mrs. Sharpswell was sorely troubled by the confession which accompanied the apology. She was still further troubled on hearing that a committee had been appointed to consider the case of the petitioners against her husband's return, and that a large fund had been subscribed at Marchborough to prosecute the petition. She turned pale with alarm, and bit her lips with vexation and anger a day or two later, when she learned that though, as a practicing Q.C., he was exempt from serving on committees, Mr. Albert Otway had contrived to be placed on the committee appointed to try her husband on a charge of doing "what they all did."

Albert's presence on the committee provoked no little gossip, and some censure at Westminster and in Lincoln's Inn. It was said by some persons that his hatred of Sharpswell was carrying him too far, and making him forgetful of the dignity of his profession. People remarked also that, in mere loss of business, he would throw away two or three thousand pounds by indulging his animosity in so singular and unbecoming a way. But all the same, censure and loss of money notwithstanding, he sat on the committee, and obviously enjoyed the mastery way in which a famous Parliamentary counsel traced certain sovereigns to a particular agent, who was proved to have received £1000 pounds in gold from Mr. Sharpswell himself shortly before the election. It was remarked that when this evidence had been established, Mr. Otway took occasion to point out to the committee how thoroughly "the nail," to use his own expression, "had been driven home." There could be no doubt of Mr. Sharpswell's guilt. The case was one in which the committee could not venture to assume that the bribing candidate had not been cognizant of the proceedings of his agents. So Mr.

Sharpswell was unseated. He had bribed clumsily, and been "found out." And he paid the penalty of being "found out." Besides losing his seat, he was assailed by party journalists, who, to Mrs. Sharpswell's acute pain and hot indignation, held him up to public execration as a man unworthy of admission to public life. Somehow, society just then became outrageously virtuous about bribery, and talked very bitterly against the latest doer of "what every body did." And as Mrs. Sharpswell lived in society, she knew its sentiments. Moreover, Harold Cannick's "friends on the press" gave very forcible expression to the world's indignation.

"Well, Otway, your friend has caught it hot and strong in the *Times* to-day," Harold Cannick observed to Albert, on the next morning after Frederick Sharpswell's ejection from "the House."

"Yes," Mr. Otway replied, quietly. "He shut me out of the Criterion Club. I have turned him out of the House of Commons." After a brief pause, he added, grimly, "But I have not quite done, even yet, with my friend, as you are pleased to call him."

No, he had not done with him.

Mr. Otway having utterly discredited Mr. Sharpswell in the Rolls, it became apparent to the latter that, if he would not fall altogether out of practice, he must retire from the presence of his enemy, and frequent another of the Equity Courts. It was not without a bitter sense of humiliation that he took this step, which was an avowal of his defeat to the whole of the Equity Bar.

But he took it, at the urgent entreaty of the few strong clients who still wished to support him, but told him frankly that they could not give him briefs against Mr. Otway, who had so completely taken possession of the ear and brain of the Master of the Rolls.

So, at the opening of the next term, Mr. Sharpswell appeared in the front line of advocates, practicing in Vice-chancellor Borton's Court; and during that term he was in several heavy causes, in which he did his work unusually well. In two cases he won a decision against the expectations of his client. He had rallied; and having got out of the way of his foe, it was felt that he might again do a decent business, though solicitors would be shy of employing him in appeals, lest he should be confronted by Mr. Otway.

Another term opened, and on its first day Mr. Sharpswell was engaged before Sir Roger Borton in a copyright case, when who should enter the Vice-chancellor's Court, and seat himself among the Queen's Counsel, but Albert Otway? Yes, Albert had moved from the Rolls, where he was triumphant, into the court of a vice-chancellor who disliked him, in order that he might inflict on his enemy further injury and humiliation. As Albert took his place in the court the two adversaries looked each other in the face. Albert's look said,

"Yes, I am here by your side again. You slandered my father, calling him cheat, forger, self-murderer; you slandered me, denouncing me to my best client as a felon's son; and I am here to avenge myself and my dead father, by crushing you, and grinding you to powder!" And once more the fight was renewed. But henceforth it was waged on painfully unequal terms. While consciousness of defeat weakened the one contentent, a sense of victoriousness enlarged the powers of the other. It was observed by counsel and solicitors that, as term followed term, Mr. Otway exhibited more and more notably the finest qualities of an advocate. There was no leader at the Bar more skillful in gliding over the weak and bringing out the strong points of a delicate case; no man more adroit in manipulating a cause of many difficulties, so as to render his view of it acceptable to the judicial mind; no advocate who could be compared with him for vigor of reasoning and excellence of manner. And while Albert became stronger in speech and quicker in sight, Mr. Sharpwell offended his few remaining clients by talking wildly and indiscreetly. Ere long he ceased to be punished by his adversary, because his staunchest friends among the solicitors ceased to pit him against his conqueror; and no rigid law forbidding him to appear in any court of first instance but that which he had chosen as his usual place of business, he began to appear now in one court of Equity, and now in another, though never in any cause of great moment and difficulty. At this stage of his humiliation he gained the nickname of "the wanderer," from his disregard of a rule more generally observed by Equity leaders some few years since than at present.

Having been discredited thus completely at Lincoln's Inn, Mr. Sharpwell received a blow that drove him from society. The Royal Alliance Bank fell with a crash, under circumstances which exposed him, as well as the other directors of the company, to contempt and suspicion of fraud. It was certain that the directors had speculated wildly, and used the funds of the bank to sustain failing enterprises in which they were deeply involved. It was proved, on the first inquiry into the circumstances of the failure, that Mr. Sharpwell, after disposing of the greater part of his capital in the Royal Alliance, had obtained from it accommodation that would certainly have been denied to him by the managers of the concern, had he not been himself one of the directors. In fact, he was tarnished in honor, as well as ruined in purse; and without in any way abusing his forensic privilege of speech in supporting a petition that arose out of the failure of the Royal Alliance, Albert Otway remarked, bitterly, in the Vice-chancellor's Court, "In palliation of the blunder and madness of these directors, it has been observed that many of them were ignorant of finance—that they are soldiers, sailors, and members of other uncommercial vocations, who had small experience

of monetary affairs. But I must insist that to be *barely honest* it is not necessary that men should be skillful financiers."

Frederick Sharpwell was not in court to hear these words as they came from his triumphant enemy's lips. But within a few hours of their utterance he read them in an evening paper at his own house; and when he had perused them, he dropped the *Globe* from his hands, and falling backward in his chair, uttered a cry that brought Mrs. Sharpwell in terror to his side.

The next morning Harold Cannick entered Albert's chamber in Lincoln's Inn, and said,

"I am told that Sharpwell is ill. He had a paralytic stroke last night—at least, gossip says so."

"And gossip tells the truth," Albert returned quickly. "I have done with Mr. Sharpwell now. I have crushed him, and ground him to powder. He is nothing but a heap of powder now, and I will neither tread it down under feet, nor kick at it. Let us never mention the man's name again."

Two months later, a sick man was supported by his wife and a female servant, as he walked feebly from the door of No. 2 Morpeth Place, Eaton Square, to the fly which in a few minutes conveyed the three persons to a railway station. The sick man was Frederick Sharpwell, and he was setting out for Pau, where he had decided to live till he should die or recover his strength. Mrs. Sharpwell had already taken a small villa near that town of Southern France, and had dispatched her four girls to it, under the charge of their nurse and French governess. Lottie's brothers had supplied her liberally with money for immediate use, but the few hundreds per annum accruing from her settlement were all the means left to the broken family.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SQUIRE OF WREN PARK.

FREDERICK SHARPWELL selected Pau as his place of residence, in obedience to the counsel of two eminent London physicians, who detected incipient disease in his lungs, when he had rallied considerably from his paralytic seizure. Labor, disappointment, and shame had produced their customary results on a delicate constitution, with an hereditary proneness to consumption. Besides striking him with paralysis, they had called into life the seeds of an even graver mischief, which the broken man had derived from his mother. The doctors were of opinion that he could not live many years—that he would probably die after two or three more winters. But while informing him that his lungs were menaced by one of the most fatal maladies, they refrained from alarming him by a full revelation of their discoveries and fears. Nor did they frighten Mrs. Sharpwell unnecessarily. It was enough for them

to tell her that professional labor had weakened her husband's chest, and to recommend that he should pass the next year in the south of France. Drawing the proper inferences from the information and advice, Lottie accompanied Frederick to Pau, with lively solicitude for his health, but with no despair of his restoration.

Pau suited the invalid. He gained strength, and recovered much of his old spirits. It relieved Lottie to see how readily he accommodated himself to his altered position, and to remark that he was less afflicted by his misfortunes than she had feared that he would be. She would rather have seen him insensible to his disgrace than inconsolable under it; but while he exhibited no such indifference to his fate as would have signified moral callousness, he soothed her apprehensions by bearing his reverses cheerfully. Of course she was sure that in respect to the affairs of the Royal Alliance Bank he had perpetrated no dishonesty, and that the imputations on his honor were the mere aspersions of his malignant enemy. Under these circumstances, her anxiety decreased and her spirits revived. She almost enjoyed a short excursion that she and he made, without the children, in the mountains; and she returned from it with a hope that another six months at Pau would "set Frederick up again, so that he could resume his profession."

Fortunately, also, the affairs of the Royal Alliance were wound up, so that the depositors had been paid twenty shillings in the pound, to the ruin of several, and the grievous distress of many of the share-holders. Mr. Sharpwell's liabilities in respect of that luckless concern were at an end.

Affairs had gone thus leniently with the invalid and his wife since their retirement from England, when, just twelve months after their arrival at Pau, Mr. Sharpwell received from London a letter that elated him prodigiously. It ran thus: "Sir,—It has become my duty to inform you that, through the death without issue of my late client, Mr. Lemuel Abbiss, only son of the late Lieutenant-general Sir Lawrence Abbiss of Wren Park, Gloucestershire, the landed estate, in which the late Mr. Lemuel Abbiss had only a life interest, has devolved on you, by the operation of the general's last will and testament. In entailing that estate on his son, you are perhaps aware that General Abbiss directed that, in the event of his son's death without issue, it should pass to the eldest male representative of the testator's niece, Alice Guerdon, daughter of the general's brother, Richard Cormorant Abbiss, and then that, in case Richard Cormorant Abbiss's issue should have become extinct, the estate should pass to the eldest male representative of the testator's niece, Jane Sharpwell, daughter of the general's brother, Stephen Abbiss. The testator's niece, Alice Abbiss, wife of John Guerdon, Esq., formerly of Hammerhampton and Earl's Court, Boringdonshire, left only one child, the late Mr. Albert Guerdon, who died 184—, and was

buried in Ewebridge church, Boringdonshire. As the only male representative of the general's niece, Jane Abbiss, your mother, you have succeeded to Wren Park, one of the finest seats in Gloucestershire, together with land in the same county, yielding a clear rental of upward of seven thousand pounds per annum. I should add that the will, by which you have acquired this fine property, requires you, under penalty of forfeiture, to assume the name and arms of Abbiss within twelve months of your entrance into possession of the estate. Awaiting your reply to this communication, I have, sir, the honor to remain, your very obedient servant, JOHN GOUGH." Mr. Gough's address was No. 8 Gray's Inn Square, London.

Here was a piece of luck for Frederick Sharpwell, who had never heard that he might under any contingencies profit by his great-uncle's will, which had been proved years ago in Gloucestershire.

Let a few words be said about General Abbiss's relations with his two brothers. When George the Third was a young king, Richard Cormorant Abbiss, Stephen Abbiss, and Lawrence Abbiss, gentlemen and brothers, had a tremendous quarrel. Family quarrels are proverbially bitter and stubborn beyond all other feuds. But they often come to an end, when they arise from the misconduct, on some important matter, of a single person, who, on seeing his error, has the good sense and generosity to cry out "peccavi," and seek forgiveness of those whom he has wronged. There is always room to hope for abatement and end to a domestic fight, having a substantial basis for a squabble. It is the reverse with the worst of all family dissensions—quarrels springing out of a dispute about just nothing. Richard, Stephen, and Lawrence were hot-tempered, explosive, overbearing men, though in some respects excellent fellows. Richard and Stephen, two naval officers, and deep drinkers, began the row. They were walking together over Congleton Downs, without church-steeple or house in view, in the teeth of a strong wind, when they differed as to the point from which the gale blew. As they had lost their way over the downs, it was not wonderful that they erred respecting the wind's course. Dick said it blew straight from the north, while Stephen declared it was due east; and they walked on, railing at one another on this important matter till they were hoarse. Before they could appeal to a weather-cock, the gale had ceased, and the wind, veering round, came up softly from the south. As naval men, experienced in winds, they deemed themselves bound by professional honor to stand by their words; and while the south wind laughed at them, each insisted that the other *had been* wrong. The dispute was renewed on the following day. It was renewed daily for a week, when the youngest of the three brothers, Lawrence, appeared on the scene, and endeavored to reconcile the two disputants. Though a landsman, Law-

rence was a nice observer of the weather, and he was in a position to assure his brothers that, at the height of the gale, the wind was a north-easter. Instead of terminating the dispute by this statement of the truth, Lawrence only infuriated Dick and Stephen yet more against each other, and came to angry words with both. The duel became a triangular fight. Each of the three maintained that the other two had impugned his veracity. Having just enough decency to refrain from pistoling one another, they exchanged words of high disdain, and parted never to meet again on this side the grave.

The youngest, Lawrence, was also the luckiest of these three explosive brothers. Richard Cormorant and Stephen died comparatively poor, in the middle term of life, each of them leaving a girl, destined to become the mother of a chief actor in this drama. But Lawrence, the soldier, rose in the army, married the heiress of Wren Park, came in for legacies which he invested in Gloucestershire acres, and lived to be a very considerable personage in that county. Having had no children by his first wife, the heiress of Wren Park, he married in his old age a young woman of humble degree, by whom he had the son of feeble mind and body, whose opportune death occasioned Mr. Gough's letter to Frederick Sharpwell.

"By heavens, Lottie, read that letter!" cried Fred Sharpwell, throwing Mr. Gough's epistle to his wife, when he had mastered its contents. "What a stroke of luck! A good house, and county position, with £7000 a year! Thank God, our poverty is at an end, our anxieties are over, our children are provided for. The right doctor, Good Fortune in her brightest mood, has come to cure me. I shall soon be well now. Hurra!"

While Mr. Sharpwell was giving utterance to these and fifty other expressions of joyful surprise, Mrs. Sharpwell perused the astounding letter that had excited him so agreeably, and so perilously.

"Well, my darling!" Frederick exclaimed, his face flushing with exultation as Lottie placed the letter on the table, and turned toward her husband a countenance that was more expressive of pain than delight.

"What! Was Albert Guerdon your cousin?" she gasped.

"Ay, to be sure he was," he replied, jocularly, "though I never set eyes upon him. I come of an unharmonious family, Lottie. My uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, great-uncles and great-aunts, only agreed to differ. They were a squabbling lot. And yet I am a fairly amiable fellow—at least, under my own roof. To be sure, Albert Guerdon was my second cousin, just as Albert Otway was my second cousin. Strange, each of those second cousins of mine was the son of a prodigious rascal in the same line of rascality. Each of them had for his father a cheat, swindler, and forger. I must say, my dear, that you married into a nice family of rogues."

"I don't believe that Mr. Guerdon of Earl's Court was a dishonest man," Mrs. Sharpwell exclaimed, warmly. "He was the victim of a dishonest partner, named Scrivener. I knew poor old Mr. Guerdon when I was a girl, and I am sure that he was a man of honor."

"You knew him? Well, that was not wonderful, for he lived somewhere in your father's part of Boringdonshire. So he did. Arleigh is not so very far from Hammerhampton."

"And Earl's Court, Mr. Guerdon's house, was within a few miles of Arleigh."

"And may be you knew the young man also?"

"Yes, yes," Lottie answered quickly, her face becoming deadly white, and then, a minute later, turning scarlet under a fear that her husband would discover a secret which she had jealously guarded from him. "I knew him and liked him. Every one liked him. If you have one second cousin, Fred, who is a bad, vindictive man, you had another who was a true gentleman."

"Pon my honor, Lottie," Fred laughed, "I am inclined to suspect that, when you were a school-girl, you had a tender regard for the 'true gentleman.'"

"Don't talk nonsense, Fred," Mrs. Sharpwell answered, with a desperate effort to maintain her self-command. "You should not reward me so for bearing testimony to the merit of your cousin, who was strangely unlike that other cousin of yours."

"Pah! confound him for a villain!" Frederick exclaimed, bitterly, showing a face of wrath that roused the wife's alarm for the invalid.

"Hush, hush, Fred! we should try to forgive our enemies."

"Well, well, it was you who reminded me of him. I won't think about him. Let us return to our good fortune. Anyhow, Lottie, you will agree with me that it was a lucky thing for us and our children that my second cousin, the 'true gentleman,' died out of the way when he did. If he were alive now, we should not have come in for seven thousand a year."

At which speech Lottie again turned pale; and as her face whitened she felt her knees tremble beneath her. At the same time a burning pain—a pain that might have been a bodily thing, with angry, gripping, red-hot claws—clutched her heart, and held it tightly. What! had it come to this? that she should hear her own husband exulting over Albert Guerdon's death? that she should be invited to join in his exultation? Ay, more, that she, Lottie Darling, the dead man's own Lottie, should be tempted, out of love and care for her children, to think that it was well for her that "he had died out of the way when he did?"

"Why, Lottie, what has come over you? You are not half as grateful to Providence as you ought to be, for your husband's and children's sake," Frederick urged, marveling at his wife's silence, and at a loss how to account for

her reluctance to concur in his thankfulness for Albert Guerdon's death.

"Has Providence, indeed, done all this for us?" she answered. "You say so. Then I am thankful for my children's sake—yes, yes, for the sake of my girls. But oh, Frederick—indeed—indeed—" And having uttered these strange and perplexing words, Mrs. Sharpwell sunk down upon her chair, and sobbed convulsively, weeping as she had not wept since the darkest of all her dark days, when Albert died.

Rising from his seat, Frederick moved toward her, to comfort her under emotions which had overpowered her, and which he attributed to excessive joy and astonishment and gratitude at their sudden change of fortune. When a woman weeps bitterly, it is not always that her husband knows the cause of her tears. It is not seldom that he misconstrues them. And ere Fred Sharpwell could lay a tender hand on the shoulder of his sobbing wife, she rose quickly and ran from the room.

"Ah!" said the husband, when she had disappeared, "it is not wonderful that the surprise and delight have been too much for her. When she has cried off her agitation she'll be herself again."

In this last remark Mr. Sharpwell was not wrong. When Mrs. Sharpwell rejoined him an hour later, she showed her brightest face, and pleased him greatly by the animation with which she spoke of their altered circumstances, and anticipated the pleasure they would have in entering Wren Park.

"How shall I ever educate my tongue, Fred," she asked, "to speak of you as Mr. Abbiss?" I must begin at once to train myself to the new style."

Of course, Mr. Sharpwell acknowledged the receipt of Mr. Gough's letter without delay. Much correspondence ensued between the solicitor and the successor to Wren Park; in the course of which Mr. Gough sent the queen's counsel a copy of General Abbiss's will, together with many other papers, and Mr. Sharpwell instructed the attorney to take charge of the estate until its new owner should enter on personal possession of it.

For a while fair fortune seemed to be making a quick cure of Mr. Sharpwell's ailments. Laughing and talking incessantly, after his old domestic wont, he ate and drank plentifully; and, recovering nerve and hilarity together with flesh and strength, he felt himself once again a sound man. And when pleasant news came to him from England of a genial spring that bade fair to glide into balmy summer, with no harsh interval of biting east winds, he declared his purpose of going at once to Gloucestershire. With wifely care Lottie implored him to beware of precipitancy, and urged him to wait in Southern France till June; but seeing him bent on returning at once to his native land, and remembering the proverb which declares "one's own way to be better than twenty doctors," she ceased to restrain him. To-

ward the close of April they passed through London, and by the middle of May the father and mother, and their four children, were beginning to "feel quite at home" in the red-brick gabled mansion, of seventeenth century architecture, that stands on an eminence overlooking the superb timber of Wren Park.

The great "county people" were in London for the "season." But Mr. and Mrs. Sharpwell had enough excitement in making acquaintance with their tenantry, and exchanging calls with the neighboring clergy, and the other less exalted "quality" of their corner of the large, hilly shire.

Frederick was delighted with his new life, and declared that, instead of resuming the practice of his miserable profession, he would live his years out as a country squire. Lottie hoped that those years would be many. But glancing at his slight frame, and remembering the cautious intimations of two London physicians, and recalling the events of the previous year, she nursed a fear that the new squire would not become an old one.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OVER THE CLARET.

FREDERICK SHARPSWELL's felicity at Wren Park was of no long duration.

Throughout his career at the bar Albert Otway had persisted in his practice of dining frequently at Harold Cannick's house. When in town, he usually found himself at the solicitor's table on one of every four or five Sundays. Sometimes the Sunday dinner-party comprised a few of the host's legal friends, as well as his wife and children. But it often happened that the solicitor and the queen's counsel drank their claret *tête-à-tête*. It was so on a certain Sunday evening, when Frederick Sharpwell had been for just five weeks a resident on his newly-acquired estate. On that occasion, having pushed the claret-jug to his friend, Harold Cannick re-opened conversation by saying;

"By-the-way, I have a strange bit of news for you about that gentleman whom you crushed and ground to powder."

"Ay, what is it?"

"He has come in for one of the finest estates in Gloucestershire—Wren Park, and seven thousand a year."

"Impossible! Who told you so?"

"My old friend John Gough, of Gray's Inn, who is now acting as Mr. Sharpwell's solicitor, just as he in past time acted for Mr. Lemuel Abbiss, by whose death Sharpwell has dropped into wealth. By Jove! that heap of powder, as you called it after the crash of the Royal Alliance, has reformed itself, acquired substance, and become a marble statue!"

"Tell me all that Gough told you of the matter," Albert Otway said, with a quickness which betrayed his lively interest in the intelligence.

Whereupon Harold Cannick, whose gossip with John Gough had gone into the particulars of Frederick Sharpwell's good fortune, told his companion all that the reader knows of the circumstances under which Lottie's husband had become a territorial personage. It is needless to repeat the terms in which Mr. Cannick, without interruption from his listener, stated the facts of the case.

"Why, the estate is mine, Cannick—not his!" Albert exclaimed, when the story had been told.

"Yours?" returned the other, with surprise.

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"Wren Park belongs to me, as the grandson of old General Abbiss's eldest brother, Richard Cormorant Abbiss. I am the son of Richard Cormorant's only child, Alice."

"My dear fellow, are you mad? Have you forgotten your mother's maiden name? Martin Otway, your father, married Miss Mary Lovegrove, and no other woman. How on earth, then, can you have any thing to do with Wren Park?"

Tapping his hand smartly on the table, and, looking searchingly into his friend's eyes, Albert retorted,

"It is you who are mad, or strangely forgetful. Recall a conversation that we had when Mr. Sharpwell shut the door of *The Criterion* against me."

"I remember it. What of that?"

"Remembering it, how can you speak to me as though I were really Martin Otway's son? I spoke to you then of my father's troubles, and confessed that I had employed artifices to separate myself, in the world's regard, from his shame. And it relieved me vastly to hear you say that you knew and approved all I had done. Consequently, I never repeated to you all the details of my artifices of disguise; and from that time to this, according to agreement, we have never alluded to my father."

"Your father?" cried the solicitor, springing to his feet in his excitement. "Who was your father? Do you mean to say that, after all, you are *not* Martin Otway's son?"

"Certainly not," replied the other gentleman, also leaping to his feet, and speaking with emphatic loudness; "I have no drop of Martin Otway's blood in my veins. My strongest moral right to bear his surname is the permission which his dead son, Reginald Albert Otway, gave me to bear it. I am the only son and only issue of John Guerdon, some years since a banker at Hammerhampton. My real, original name is Albert Guerdon; and, as Albert Guerdon, I am entitled to Wren Park."

The solicitor was staggered.

Resuming his chair—an act in which he was imitated by his guest—he drew a long breath, and mused for half a minute before he replied, "All I can say is, from the time when you gave me your card in the smoking-room of *The White Loaf* till a minute since, I have regarded you as the son of Martin Otway, of Cleve

Lodge, Richmond—a man who was first cousin to the late Mr. Commissioner Sharpwell, and who committed suicide, after reducing himself to insolvency, and perpetrating several discreditable acts in money matters. I believe that Martin Otway was the victim of a worse man than himself, and that he was not such a scoundrel as his enemies declared him. But there is no doubt that he was a person that no decent man would care to claim for his father. Consequently, when you, with obvious embarrassment and national shame, confessed yourself to be his son, I of course believed you."

It was the queen's counsel's turn to be staggered.

Here was a revelation! To escape from the shame of being John Guerdon's son, he had taken upon himself the shame of being thought the son of a man who had actually done such crimes as those of which John Guerdon was falsely accused.

"Why on earth," urged the solicitor, "when you were fathering yourself on some one, did you not make choice of a decent man for your father?"

Mr. Otway flushed with a boyish shame at the astounding rashness with which he had fathered himself on a man of whom he knew just nothing, as he answered, "Come, come, don't laugh at my folly, Cannick. I was a green, raw boy then, notwithstanding my belief in my cleverness. Moreover, my mind had for some time been cruelly disturbed by grief. Let me now tell you the true history of my life."

"By all means."

"But first, old friend and true friend, say that you forgive me for the deception I have practiced against you."

"No, no, Otway," the solicitor responded warmly, "not *against* me, but *for* me. Our friendship has long been the chief pleasure of my life; and I should never have had it, if I had not thought you Martin Otway's son, and taken you up, in the first instance, out of feeling that you ought not to suffer for his misdeeds. God knows, I have nothing to forgive you!"

Whereupon, Albert told the true story of his life to his listener. After describing his Continental education, he came to the period of his life when he won Lottie Darling's love, and to the crash of Guerdon & Scrivener's bank. Making his friend see how he had recourse to imposture for Lottie's sake as much as his own, he told how he had fallen in again with Martin Otway's son, and buried the Bohemian in Ewebridge church. Every fact of his deception was revealed to the solicitor. And having brought his narrative down to the time when he encountered his companion in Shadow Court, Fleet Street, he told how he had already paid, through Mr. Broadbent's agency, all the balance of unsatisfied claims on his father's estate; and how he was still saving money with a view to reinstate Blanche Heathcote (wife of Colonel Dangerfield of the 10th Lancers) in possession of her plundered fortune.

"By heavens!" Harold Cannick exclaimed, enthusiastically, when he heard the whole story, "John Guerdon left behind him a son who has proved himself an honest man, though he has fought the world under false colors."

"Yes," said Albert, bitterly, with equal self-scorn and self-respect, "though I have been an impostor, I am no rogue."

"And what became of your old love, Otway?" asked Harold Cannick. Having heard the romance, the solicitor wanted the sequel.

"Did she marry happily?"

"No, she never married."

"Aha!" cried Harold Cannick, gleefully.

"You mean to marry her even yet, when you have paid Mrs. Dangerfield her fortune, and cleared every blot from your father's memory? Now I see, my dear boy, why I could not lure you into marrying one of my girls, who, thank God, are all of them happily settled with good husbands."

A cloud came over Albert's brow, as he abashed his jocular friend by answering solemnly,

"She is dead—she died a single woman. She has been dead these several years. Her body lies in a Boringdonshire church-yard; her soul is with the angels. No, Cannick, I shall never have a wife in this world. My bride is in heaven."

"Poor girl! poor girl!" ejaculated the solicitor, covering his embarrassment by filling his claret-glass, and then sipping the wine in silence for the next minute or two.

Resuming the conversation, Albert said,

"So, you see, Cannick, as John Guerdon's son, I am entitled to General Abbiss's estate; and I will lose no time in ousting the fellow who has wrongful possession of it. Mr. Sharpswell knows that he has no right there. He knows well enough who I am; and, imagining that my imposture must silence me, and debar me from insisting on my rights, he has clutched my property, and is chuckling over his successful seizure of my estate."

"Tut, tut!" interposed Harold. "Probably he thinks himself master of Wren Park, with an indefeasible title to it."

He knows that I am his second cousin. He told you I was his second cousin at the Criterion Club."

"He knows that Reginald Albert Otway was his second cousin," returned the solicitor, "and I'll bet a penny that to this day he believes you to be that Reginald Albert Otway, only son of the Martin Otway who had a lawsuit and furious quarrel with Commissioner Sharpswell."

"That can't be!" exclaimed Albert loudly, and even angrily.

"But it can be!" returned Harold Cannick. "And I'll wager you, Otway, £10,000 to a red herring that he believes you to be the man you have pretended to be, and that he believes Albert Guerdon's body is lying in Ewebridge church. No single word that Mr. Sharpswell ever spoke to me forbids me to think so. All

that he said to me about you was just as applicable to you, when regarded as Martin Otway's son, as when known to be John Guerdon's son. As he never disturbed my impression that you were his second cousin by Martin Otway, he was doubtless under that impression himself. It must be so. Commissioner Sharpswell and Martin Otway were ferocious enemies; and perhaps Frederick Sharpswell's hatred of you was, at the outset, an enmity derived from his father, who had a Corsican temper. Depend upon it, he would not have detested you as hotly and quickly as he did, had he thought you to be his other second cousin, Albert Guerdon."

"Anyhow, I'll have Wren Park," Albert exclaimed, hotly.

"Of course, of course," the solicitor answered. "You must have Wren Park. But to get it you will have to endure much painful exposure."

"A fig for the exposure! As I have lived all these years under the infamy of being a veritable rogue's son, I may as well avow myself the son of a man who, though a reputed rogue, was an honest gentleman. As for my false declaration at Lincoln's Inn, my fellow-benchers won't be hard toward me about that. As for the world's opinion, I have taught society to respect me; and it will continue to respect me, in spite of exposure and scandal."

"It will be an exciting and slightly scandalous suit."

"So much the better. I have been concerned as counsel in so many exciting and scandalous suits, that, by way of variety, I should like to be concerned as a principal in a *cause célèbre*. Go to work at once, Cannick. Open fire on Mr. Frederick Sharpswell this very week. Let there be no delay. And now, let us go to the drawing-room, and have a cup of tea with Mrs. Cannick."

"Cup of tea! Why, man, my wife has been in bed these last four hours! It's three o'clock to-morrow morning; and you had better be on your way back to the Temple."

As he walked from Regent's Park to his residence-chambers in the Inner Temple, by the light of a full moon moving in a star-spangled, cloudless sky, Albert meditated upon what Harold Cannick had said toward the close of their long interview, respecting the probability that Frederick Sharpswell was unaware of his identity with Albert Guerdon. Now that he knew his second cousin Sharpswell to have been second cousin of the man whose name he had assumed, Albert could see, with the solicitor, how much more than possible it was that the imposture, consisting of two separate great impostures and many smaller deceptions, had misled Sharpswell, as well as hundreds of other persons. By the spurious interment in Ewebridge church, Sharpswell had perhaps been caused, like thousands of Boringdonshire folk, to believe that his second cousin Guerdon was dead and buried. It was more than possible that he still remained under that erroneous

impression. If he were under this misconception, it followed that he had acted with no dishonest design in taking possession of Wren Park. It followed also that, in all his hostile acts against Mr. Otway of the Chancery Bar, Sharpswell had believed himself to be striking the actual son of his father's enemy, Martin Otway. The hypothesis accounted satisfactorily for Sharpswell's neglect to inform the Lincoln's Inn benchers of the false declaration—an omission, on his enemy's part, which had always puzzled Albert, who could not attribute it to his enemy's generous forbearance, or explain it by supposing that his foe shrank from calling the attention of the benchers to one of his own domestic disgraces. Throwing new light on Sharpswell's enmity against him, the hypothesis also changed to Albert's mind the character of acts which were chiefly accountable for the malignity and almost repulsive vindictiveness with which he had persecuted his rival. If Sharpswell had mistaken him for Martin Otway's son, it followed that he had not slandered John Guerdon and denounced John Guerdon as a thief, forger, and suicide, but had only spoken harsh but substantially true words of Martin Otway. It followed that he had not committed against John Guerdon's memory the outrage of which he had seemed to John Guerdon's son to be guilty. Was it possible, Albert asked himself, that in his filial zeal and devotion he had regarded as his father's defamer a man who had never meant to speak evil of the banker of Hammerhampton? Could it be that, from honest motives and impulses, he had for years been wreaking vengeance on a man for an imaginary wrong? Had he striven for years to ruin a man who after all had, at the outset of their feud, been nothing worse than his disagreeable rival?

As Albert put these questions to himself he became uneasy in his conscience. The excitements of the previous hours, Harold Cannick's talk, the recent discoveries, the cool evening air, the tranquilizing moonlight, had somehow brought him to a relenting mood. The time of happy influences was approaching, when his hatred of Frederick would perish quickly and utterly. But that season of generosity and justice had not yet arrived. "By Heaven," he said, as, after walking down Inner Temple Lane, and pacing southward from the passage of dark shadow, he came upon an open terrace, gleaming whitely in the moonlight, "I hope that I have not been too hard on the poor devil. Anyhow, he was a beast, and treated me badly; but if he did not mean to wrong my father's memory, I have gone a deuced deal too far. Still, I mean to have Wren Park. When I have paid off Blanche Heathcote—Mrs. Dangerfield, I beg her pardon—and find myself in possession of Wren Park, it will be time enough for me to do something handsome for the poor devil, if I should find myself to have gone too far."

Half an hour later the owner of the awakened conscience was sleeping soundly. On the following day his first words were, "Cannick must go to work at once. I will spend next Christmas in Gloucestershire."

CHAPTER XXX.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIGHT.

MR. CANNICK acted promptly on his instructions, and in the course of the week he sent to Wren Park a letter which Mr. Sharpswell read with flashing eyes, and reperused with intense excitement, before he passed it over the breakfast-table to Lottie, who, reading correctly the movements of her husband's lips, and the signs of suppressed rage in his whitened face, asked quickly what evil news the letter contained.

"Look at it," Frederick Sharpswell said, hoarsely.

"Impossible! incredible!" Mrs. Sharpswell exclaimed, indignantly, when she had read the lawyer's announcement that a claimant of Wren Park had appeared in the person of Albert Guerdon, grandson of Richard Cormorant Abbiss, who had for several years practiced as a Q.C. at the Chancery Bar, under the name of Albert Otway. "What effrontery, and wickedness, and malignant enmity! Having done his utmost for years to ruin us, and beggar our children, that abominable man would strip us of Wren Park!"

"My cousin, Reginald Albert Otway, is even a greater rascal than his father," rejoined Frederick Sharpswell. "You used to think, Lottie, that I exaggerated the evil of this scoundrel. What do you think now?"

"But he can't succeed in this attempt to plunder us?"

"Heaven only knows! The devil helps his own, and this child of the devil would not venture on the audacious enterprise if he did not feel that he had a fair chance of success."

"But he is altogether unlike Mr. Albert Guerdon, who has not been dead so many years but that there are hundreds of persons in the world who, from their recollection of him, will be able to declare that, in pretending to be Mr. Albert Guerdon, Mr. Otway is an execrable impostor."

"By-the-way, you saw Otway once in Boringdonshire?"

"Yes, but only once."

"Have you ever seen him since?"

"I am not aware that I have ever seen him since. Those of his friends who knew us, of course, never asked him to meet us; but I have seen his colored *carte de visite*, and in every particular the picture concurs with my memory in assuring me that he bears no resemblance to Mr. Guerdon. This man has a long, lined face; Mr. Guerdon's was oval, and without a furrow. The impostor has straight, shelving eyebrows; Mr. Guerdon had curving

ones. This bad man has red hair, whereas dear Albert had beautiful dark locks." The speaker stopped abruptly. In her excitement she had forgotten caution. She had spoken of "dear Albert," and recalled his "beautiful dark locks." Moreover, she saw from her husband's look of surprise, and his peculiar smile, that he had discovered something of her old love for "dear Albert."

Without any feeling of jealousy, Frederick Sharpswell laughed lightly, as he said,

"Then once upon a time, Lottie, my second cousin, Albert Guerdon, was 'dear Albert' to you?"

In five seconds Mrs. Sharpswell had left her seat at the breakfast-table, and slipped to the floor at her husband's knees, when she turned upward to him a blushing face and two tearful eyes, and confessed the one great secret which she had kept from him throughout their married life.

"Fred, dearest," she said, imploringly, "you won't be jealous of a dead man? I did love him very much, and he loved me. We were engaged, and on the point of being married, when the failure of the Hammerhampton Bank, and poor old Mr. Guerdon's death and disgrace, separated us. When Albert died I went to his funeral, and mourned for him as though I had been his widow; and it was at his funeral that I met his friend, Mr. Otway, our enemy. For years I held to my purpose of never marrying; but time comforted me, and brought me to you—my own, dear, gentle, brave husband—who taught me to love again. Oh, Fred, don't be angry with me—don't love me less, now you know this!"

"My darling—angry with you—tut, tut!" returned Mr. Sharpswell, caressing the wife whom he loved thoroughly, and feeling no resentment against his dead cousin; albeit, even while he cosseted her and kissed the tears from her cheeks, he was assured in his heart that she had never loved him as much as she had loved Albert Guerdon.

"She loves him still," he thought, with a sadness that was not jealousy, though it may have been akin to it. "But never mind; he is dead, and I am living. To be her living husband in the second place of her heart is better than to be her dead lover in the first."

For several minutes Lottie's confession, and the endearments which followed it, put Harold Cannick's letter and Mr. Otway's scandalous pretension out of the minds of the husband and wife. But ere long they returned to the solicitor's epistle, and discussed its contents from half a hundred different points of view.

"Well, well," said Mr. Sharpswell, at the close of the long conversation, "we shall see what the impostor can do to oust us from this pleasant place. Anyhow, I shall have a telling witness in you. What will be his dismay when you appear in court, and declare him not the man to whom you were engaged in your girlhood! I imagine that, with all his daring and

vindictiveness, Mr. Otway would not have told his solicitor to write me that letter if he had known that my wife had loved Albert Guerdon, and been present at his funeral."

"Shall I be dragged into court?" Mrs. Sharpswell cried, with a shudder of alarm, "and be made to tell of my old love? Oh, shall I?"

"You would have the courage to appear as a witness at the trial, Lottie," said Frederick, "for my sake, and the sake of our children?"

"Oh yes, I would do any thing for you and the children!" was the answer, uttered sadly and submissively.

"Of course you would. And now I'll go off to Gloucester, and telegraph for Mr. Gough, of Gray's Inn. I must see him at once."

On the following morning Mr. Gough breakfasted with his client and Mrs. Sharpswell at Wren Park. Of course the solicitor concurred with his host and hostess in regarding Albert's claim as an impudent pretense. Infuriated by the good fortune of the enemy whom he had persecuted at the Bar, and endeavored to drive from society, Mr. Otway—like many a clever and overworked man before him—had gone mad. He was insane. It was incredible that he would persist in declaring himself the man who had been buried years ago in Boringdonshire, in the presence of a multitude of his old neighbors of that county. Probably they should hear in a month that Mr. Otway was in a lunatic asylum. Still Mr. Cannick's letter must be answered at once. And if the action were really brought it must be strenuously defended. Mr. Gough returned to Gray's Inn with instructions to act vigorously, as though the mad impostor were in his right mind, and his wild statement a serious matter.

The impostor and the actual possessor of Wren Park having crossed swords by their attorneys, Albert told his story to the benchers of Lincoln's Inn, who, on hearing the circumstances which had induced their brother of the bench to assume a false name, were unanimous that it would ill become them to make a pother about the false declaration of parentage. They had no right to punish so eminent a member of their profession for a youthful indiscretion. It was certain that Mr. Otway had proved himself worthy of the honors of the law. He had been a scrupulously honorable, as well as singularly successful advocate. Moreover, the member for Swanbeach had made himself personally agreeable to the benchers; while Mr. Sharpswell, who had never been popular in his Inn, was disesteemed as a failure—indeed, almost as one of the black sheep of the Bar. The scandal of Mr. Sharpswell's ignominious ejection from the House of Commons had tended to discredit political lawyers. His connection with the Royal Alliance had not raised queen's counsel in the esteem of the City. Mr. Otway had the sympathy of the Inns of Court.

Albert having told his story to the benchers, it forthwith became the latest piece of news at

the table of every London barrister and solicitor. From the legal cliques it passed into general society, and was quickly caught up by writers for the newspapers, who produced it with graphic touches and dramatic improvements for readers in every village of the kingdom, and every colony of the British Empire. The country was assured that ere long it would be entertained with a trial as marvelous and exciting as any in recent annals.

Though Albert and his solicitor were confident of winning their cause, they did not shut their eyes to the serious difficulties of their undertaking. The plaintiff's character and position at the Bar would be in his favor. To any jury it would appear in the highest degree improbable that a leader of the Chancery Bar, having a seat in the House of Commons, and a fair prospect of winning the highest honors of his profession, would, from motives of vengeance or gain, perjure himself in a court of justice, and endeavor by a prodigious fraud to wrest a large estate from its rightful owner. Such a person was not likely to be guilty of an execrable imposture. On the other hand, Albert would come before the jury, avowing himself a successful impostor, who had misled the world by two extraordinary deceptions. He had buried himself with all the solemn forms of religious sepulture, and, after mourning over his own tomb, had assumed another person's name, and entered his profession by means of a false declaration. These facts could not fail to create prejudice against him in the minds of the jury. On the whole, Harold Cannick was of opinion that the prejudice arising from his client's avowed impostures would be more powerful than the influence of his honorable conduct and position at the Bar. It would be strange if some of the jurors did not feel that, capable by his own admission of extraordinary impostures, he was also capable of a still more daring and wicked fraud. The man, they would argue, who could falsely declare himself Martin Otway's son, might also be false in declaring himself John Guerdon's son.

It was obvious to both solicitor and client that in getting up their case they should provide themselves with an army of witnesses, of intelligence and unimpeachable character, to certify Mr. Otway's identity with Albert Guerdon. It being impossible that the cause should be tried before the Long Vacation, they had plenty of time for their preparations. And they used it well. Fortunately for Albert, while exercising remarkable ingenuity in concealing his identity, he had at every stage of his impostures provided for a time when he might wish to relinquish his disguise, and be recognized as John Guerdon's son.

His first step was to resume, as far as possible, his old appearance. Ceasing to use the skin-wash which had given him a false complexion, he quickly recovered his previous color, or rather he exhibited such a color as a man of his original tint would have arrived at,

in the ordinary course of things, at middle life. At the same time he discontinued the use of the bleaching lotion and dye which had for years given his hair an artificial color. While his hair was gradually assuming its proper darkness, he allowed it to grow on his head, cheeks, and chin. The change thus wrought in his appearance occasioned no little gossip at the Bar, and in the social rooms attached to the House of Commons. What was he after? His disuse of the razor he attributed to a new and singular sensitiveness of the skin, which made him intolerant of the sharp instrument. As to the change of color in his hair, on being accused of dyeing, he observed, jocularly,

"Surely I may dye my hair if I like? Why may I not, like other men, indulge my personal vanity as I grow old?"

When the courts rose for the Long Vacation, Mr. Otway had a goodly show of dark hair on his head, together with a presentable beard, a pair of whiskers, and a pair of mustaches. The change in his appearance was wonderful.

As soon as the Courts of Equity were closed he went abroad with his friend, Harold Cannick. Paris was the first city in which the tourists tarried. They lodged at the Hôtel Voltaire, and the first Parisian whom they visited was Monsieur Oudarde, of the Palais Royal. Nothing could be more satisfactory than Monsieur Oudarde's reception of the visitors, who, coming upon the artist in his studio without having announced their names, begged him to recall old times, and say whether he had ever seen either of them before.

Having surveyed Harold Cannick's burly figure, and broad face, and whitened locks attentively, the artist of disguise, shaking his head, and shrugging his shoulders, said,

"No, monsieur. It can not be that I have seen you before. You are unknown to me."

Turning to Albert Otway, the transfigurator examined him attentively for two or three minutes, and then exclaimed,

"Yes, I know you—no, I mean I ought to know you." We have met before. By my faith, I have seen you in the past. When was it? Where was it? Who on earth are you?"

Helping the artist's memory by a feigned voice, Albert, addressing him in French, with a strong German accent, replied,

"That is my affair, Monsieur Oudarde. I want you to tell me who I was when you saw me."

"Ah, that voice!" exclaimed the Frenchman, clapping his hands, and then throwing himself into a chair. "I should know it. Here, here. Remain. Be quiet. I will think. I have you in my memory, and you will come immediately."

For three minutes the transfigurator sat in a brown study, when he leaped to his feet, and cried, in a sharp key,

"Now I have you; it is so. Yes, yes, the same, and no other. Prussien-Anglais. Wait, wait."

Uttering these exclamations, Monsieur Oudarde ran to a table of many drawers that stood in a corner of the room; and having taken a folio from one of the drawers, he returned to his visitors, with a face gleaming with triumphant excitement, and put a crayon sketch before them, saying,

"Here you are, Herr Heintsmann, Prussien-Anglais. Aha, and so long since!"

The picture was the same sketch of the design for Albert's disguise which Monsieur Oudarde had drawn rapidly, in Albert's presence, at the opening of their first interview.

"What is it, Cannick?" Albert asked of his friend.

"Why, a deuced good likeness of yourself as you were when I first knew you," was the answer.

"And here," exclaimed Monsieur Oudarde, turning the paper so as to exhibit the reverse side of the sheet, "is the picture of you as you were before I disguised you!"

It was so, and a very good likeness too, with the flowing black whiskers and beard, and curving eyebrows, though it had been sketched in from memory.

"It is my way to portray the original on the back of the design thus," the artist explained. Pointing to some written words under the picture, Monsieur Oudarde added, "And I wrote that: 'Herr Heintsmann (Prussien)—bah, bah, vraiment, Monsieur Anglais!' You see you did not trick me, sir. No, no."

Of course, Albert and Mr. Cannick joined in the merry laughter with which the Frenchman commemorated his sagacity in detecting the Englishman under the Prussian affectations.

The portraits having been duly examined and approved, Albert said,

"Now, Monsieur Oudarde, I want you to restore the old curve to my eyebrows."

"Ah, by my faith," was the answer, "it can scarcely be done! Too many years have passed for me to be able to give you back those charming brows—at least, to restore them completely. But I can do a little, perhaps much, though certainly not all."

Albert remained ten days in Paris, during which time he underwent another operation with the knife, which had the effect of restoring his eyebrows somewhat to their original form. At the same time the transfigurator treated the brows with an unguent, which softened the hair, so that it could be trained and waxed in a manner which increased the curving aspect of the superciliary lines. It should be remarked, also, that, before bidding Monsieur Oudarde adieu, Albert put in writing the circumstances of the artist's recognition of him, and obtained the artist's written certificate of the truth of the writing. On appearing in the witness-box, if he should be required to give evidence at the approaching trial, Monsieur Oudarde would be able to swear that, in recognizing his former patient, his memory had not

been quickened by a single statement of fact from either Albert or his solicitor.

Leaving Paris, Albert Otway and Harold Cannick went to Berlin and Vienna, to Bonn and Heidelberg, Venice and Rome; and in all of these cities he encountered old friends of his boyish days or early manhood, who, on meeting him by chance, recognized him spontaneously, before he or any other person had told them his name. They were not invited to conferences with him; nor were they prepared for his appearance by direct announcements of his coming, or even by hints or rumor that they might expect to see him before long. There was no need for him to remind them of the circumstances of their former intercourse, or in any way to force himself on their recollections. Several times it occurred, during his rapid Continental tour, that he addressed a former acquaintance who had forgotten him; and, on seeing himself thus forgotten, Albert, instead of recalling himself to the oblivious person's mind, went away, leaving the old friend in ignorance as to who he was.

Returning to England, Albert hastened down to the Great Yard and the Owleybury district. The first person on whom he called in his old neighborhood was Mr. Fairbank, the rector of Ewebridge, to whom time had given white hairs and a drooping figure, without robbing his intellect of force. To the servant who opened the door of the rectory, Albert merely announced himself as "A gentleman wishing to see Mr. Fairbank." Half a minute later he entered the study, where the rector was writing at his desk. Rising courteously to greet the visitor, whose name had not been proclaimed, Mr. Fairbank regarded Albert, and then immediately started back with a look of alarm.

"My dear sir," he ejaculated, "how you frighten me! You can not be Mr. Guerdon, for I buried him years since in my church."

"You have said precisely what I wished you to say, Mr. Fairbank," said Albert, heightening the agitation of the clergyman, who immediately recognized the voice, as well as the appearance of John Guerdon's son. "You know me. I am the same Albert Guerdon whom you believed yourself to have buried years since."

"Are you also Mr. Otway of the Chancery Bar?" the rector inquired, stiffly.

"The same. Perhaps you have already received a call from Mr. Sharpwell, or his solicitor."

Even more stiffly the rector answered, "I have seen both those gentlemen. They showed me a portrait of Mr. Otway, which certainly is no portrait of you."

"Certainly not of my present appearance," was the reply.

"It is impossible, Mr. Guerdon," said the rector, showing, by his utterance of the surname, that he had no doubt of the visitor's identity with Albert Guerdon, "that the *carte de visite* of Mr. Otway, in my possession, can ever have been a picture of you under any circumstances."

"That is a question which we may waive for the present, my dear sir," returned Albert. "The question which I want you to answer is, whether you know me. But I need not press it, for you have already addressed me by my right name."

"I wish, sir," the clergyman answered, with dignity and increasing severity, "that I did not recognize you. I would rather believe your body dead and your soul with God than know you to have been the perpetrator of an impious fraud."

"I deserve your reproof," returned Albert, who, instead of resenting, admired the rector's stately sternness and righteous displeasure, "and accept it submissively. At the same time, sir, I entreat you to allow me to speak with you."

"I will hear from you, Mr. Guerdon, whatever it is my duty to hear."

Whereupon Albert, having gained the rector's ear, contrived to gain his heart, showing to him that, though the fraudulent interment had been an irreverent business, the perpetrator of the imposture could urge much in palliation of his misconduct. And having conciliated the clergyman, Albert prevailed upon him to look at two pictures—one a portrait of the Bohemian, as he had appeared in his later days; the other a sketch of the same man lying in his coffin, which latter drawing Albert had himself made of the lifeless features of Martin Otway's son.

"At every point of my reprehensible imposture," Albert explained, "I took care to preserve to myself the means of undoing my deceptions, and establishing the identity which I was concealing. On opening Albert Otway's coffin, you will find his body embalmed, and exhibiting features which, besides proving him not to have been Albert Guerdon, show that in life he bore no resemblance to his posthumous personator."

In Owleybury and Hammerhampton Albert Guerdon encountered at every turn old acquaintances, who on seeing him recognized him instantly and spontaneously. The same was the case wherever he went during his sojourn in the Great Yard and the old neighborhood. Yet more, he encountered no single person of his former circle in Boringdonshire who had any doubt that he was John Guerdon's son. And when it transpired that it was he who had paid his father's debts in the county, there arose in every part of the shire a disposition to render him honor. In the opinion of the magnates and mob of the Great Yard and the cathedral town, it was not enough that they should condone his offense in deluding them with a sham interment of himself; it was incumbent on them that they should demonstrate their admiration of his honesty and filial devotion.

Declining to be the hero of a social celebration until he had won his lawsuit, and completed the restoration of his father's good name by getting conclusive evidence of the old man's

innocence of fraud and forgery, Albert was about to return to London, when, on the last morning of his sojourn at Hammerhampton, he received a call from a very old, dusty, mean-looking man, named Jacob Coleman.

"Ah, Mr. Coleman," said Albert, rising from his breakfast-table in a private room of Hammerhampton's chief hotel, as he greeted the unprepossessing visitor, "we have not met for several years, and time has altered you a good deal; but I remember you."

"And I remember you, sir," mumbled the venerable sneak.

"But how comes it, sir," asked Albert, rather sharply, "as you are alive, and I have been ten days in Hammerhampton, that you have not found me out and said so sooner?"

"Well, sir, since the gentry all knew you, I thought it would be more becoming in an old, broken, humble man like me to keep out of the way."

"Yes," said Albert, dryly, whose legal instinct assured him that Jacob Coleman was a paltry fellow, and had come to him at last for some dirty purpose; "and now that you are here, what do you want to say?"

"I would speak a word, sir, about that matter of the forged power of attorney, by which that villain Scrivener got at Miss Heathcote's money."

"Go on—speak about it."

"You always thought it a forgery of your father's name, sir."

"I knew it to be forgery."

"But you could not quite prove it, sir; and if you remember, sir, you offered a £100 reward to any one who would prove that it was a forgery. You may remember, sir."

"Of course I remember."

"Well, Mr. Guerdon," the old man continued, in a voice that alternately mumbled and whined, "I have made so bold as to come for to ask if that offer still holds; for I think, sir, an old man who served your father (God bless him for a true gentleman!) may be even yet of some service to you in that matter."

"Yes, Mr. Coleman, the offer does hold good. I still want conclusive proof that my father did not sign that power of attorney, and if you can give me the proof, I will give you £100. Speak on."

"You see, sir, I suffered by the failure of the bank, and I am a very poor man."

"Speak to the purpose, Mr. Coleman. Can you give me the proof that my father could not have signed that power of attorney at Hammerhampton, as the document represents?"

Seeing that he could not improve his position by mumbling and whining about his poverty, the aged Mr. Coleman put his right hand into one of the deep skirt-pockets of his rusty-brown, long-skirted coat, and slowly brought out of it two manuscript books, bound in red morocco. One of these books was inscribed, in gold letters on the red cover, "Diary." On the cover of the other was written, "Absent Letter Reg-

ister." At a glance Albert recognized them as the two manuscript books for which he had vainly sought in George Street and at Earl's Court shortly before leaving Boringdonshire. At the time of the futile search for them, he had suspected that Mr. Coleman had taken possession of them. Indeed, in offering a reward to the public, he had regarded himself as telling Mr. Coleman the price of the missing books. And now, after the lapse of so many years, the old thief was producing the stolen volumes.

"How did those books come into your possession?" Albert asked, quietly.

"Shortly after you left these parts the Diary and Register fell into my hands," the aged rogue answered, trembling as he spoke.

"Indeed! They fell into your hands, did they?"

"Ay, sir, and that they did, my dear young master, at a sale of old paper. You see, sir, the old rubbish of paper of all sorts was sold at George Street; and I bought a lot that *happened* to have the volumes in it. And then I did not know where to find you, Mr. Guerdon. And then the next I heard of you was that you were dead and buried, so I never had an opportunity of bringing them to you till now. But I never let them go out of my hands, for I always had a hope that they might clear my dear master's honor. And now you have them, sir."

"For a hundred pounds—dirt cheap, eh?"

"Well, sir, you said the offer held good."

Having examined certain pages of the two books, while their purloiner stood mumbling and whining about his love of his dear master, Albert said,

"Why, Coleman, these books prove that, on the day of the forgery at Hammerhampton, my father was at Liverpool, and that *you* were in attendance on him."

"Just so, sir. 'Tis so, sir. I was with him. You remember, sir, I always told you that I was at Liverpool at the time of the forgery at Hammerhampton."

"Ay; and you also told me that you could not tell where my father was at the same time. And now it appears that you and he were together at Liverpool. So you could remember that you were in Liverpool yourself, though you forgot that you were there as my father's attendant."

"Just so, sir. 'Tis so, sir," whined Mr. Jacob Coleman, while his cunning wrinkled face turned to a ghastly yellow-white, and his hands shook violently. "The memory is a queer thing, Mr. Guerdon—an unaccountable queer thing is the memory—do believe me, sir—a very queer thing!"

Albert was tempted to deal hardly with the old scoundrel. By a little cross-examination Mr. Coleman could have been brought to confess that he had purloined the evidence, on seeing how desirous Albert was to clear his father's honor; and that he had retained it in the hope that he might, by "holding on," extort more

than £100 out of his young master for the books that had been stolen, and for the information which an honest clerk, in Mr. Coleman's position, would have given at once and without hope of reward. Of course Albert saw the whole of Mr. Coleman's rascality; but what could he gain by the further humiliation of so wretched a creature? Taking out his check-book, Albert filled in and signed a draft for £100, which he gave to the old man.

"And may I be so bold, Mr. Guerdon," mumbled the old rascal, when he had pocketed the precious paper, and taken his greasy hat from the floor, "as to ask on parting if I may shake hands with my old master's son?"

There was pity in the disdain with which Albert replied, "Be content, old man, with what my hand has just done for you. There, go away."

Whereupon Mr. Jacob Coleman, mumbling and whining about the queerness of his memory, shambled out of the breakfast-room.

"Villainous old sneak!" Albert exclaimed, as soon as his retiring visitor was out of hearing. "But, thank heavens, my father's memory is purged of shame! I need no longer blush to call myself his son!"

Half an hour later, Albert was on his way back to London in the best of good spirits.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE EVENING BEFORE THE BATTLE.

EWEBRIDGE RECTORY was not the only place in Boringdonshire where Albert came upon the track of Frederick Sharpwell and Mr. John Gough, who had visited the county in search of evidence against the claimant of Wren Park, some six weeks or two months before his re-appearance in the Great Yard. Coming to Hammerhampton and Owleybury, while Albert Guerdon was universally believed by the people of those towns to have died years ago, and to have been buried in Ewebridge church, Mr. Sharpwell and his lawyer discovered in Boringdonshire nothing to shake their opinion that Mr. Otway was a madman, as well as a rogue. To each of the many persons with whom they spoke about Albert Guerdon in Boringdonshire, they showed one of Mr. Otway's *cartes de visite*, asking if the picture at all resembled the late Mr. Guerdon. In every quarter they were assured that John Guerdon's son was notably unlike the portrait, especially in the eyebrows. Everywhere, also, they were told that it would be easy for them to dispose of the impostor, as the man whom he declared himself to be was unquestionably lying in the Guerdon vault. In short, so long as Frederick Sharpwell and the solicitor were in or near the Great Yard the impudent attempt to disturb the possessor of Wren Park was treated as a preposterous joke. Boringdonshire was unanimous in saying that Mr. Otway must have lost his head.

And not a few of the Boringdonshire ladies, who had known Mrs. Sharpwell when she was Lottie Darling, wrote to her, throwing piquant ridicule on Mr. Otway's absurd proceedings. It is not wonderful, therefore, that Frederick returned to Gloucestershire in high spirits, and was more than ever persuaded that his old enemy was qualifying for a strait-waistcoat and a padded room.

But though convinced of his assailant's insanity, Frederick Sharpwell fretted and chafed under his anticipations of the coming lawsuit, when the elation, occasioned by his trip to Boringdonshire, had subsided. Alternating between petulance and despondency, he could not thoroughly enjoy the first days of partridge-shooting; and before the end of September, having caught cold from a shower that drenched him to the skin in the middle of a turnip-field, he was again in the hands of the doctors, who had detected mischief in his lungs. The doctors urged him to take great care of himself. In their private talk, after stethoscopic their patient, they agreed that his malady, stayed for a time by a mild climate and exhilarating incidents, was now making rapid progress.

His health was in this state when, at the beginning of October, the newspapers informed him of Albert's reception at Hammerhampton and Owleybury. It seemed, then, that all the world was going mad, together with Albert Otway. If they were not insane, how could the people declare the impostor, with his red hair, deeply lined face, and straight, shelving brows, identical with a man who, when alive, had been notable for dark hair, curving brows, and smoothness of facial contour? Mr. Sharpwell laughed scornfully at the multitude of fools; while Lottie was openly indignant, and secretly alarmed. The newspapers, which had thus agitated the husband and wife, were followed by other newspapers that, giving minuter accounts of Albert's doings in and near the Great Yard, described the wonderful change which a few weeks had made in his appearance. His familiar associates at the Bar were so staggered by it that, until they had examined him attentively, and listened to his voice, they could not recognize their friend Otway, now that he had curling dark hair, with dark beard and mustache, and eyebrows notably unlike those for which the member for Swanbeach had been remarkable.

At the same time, from the very ladies who a few weeks earlier had ridiculed Mr. Otway's mad conduct, and assured their old friend that he was an impostor, Lottie received letters, condoling with her on the new aspect of the case, and expressing a decided opinion that the re-transfigured man was Albert Guerdon.

In compliance with his client's wishes, Mr. Gough ran down for a second time to Boringdonshire, to ascertain on the spot the precise value of feeling in the pretender's favor. The solicitor was astounded by what he learned in

the Great Yard and the neighborhood of Owleybury. Making a detour to Gloucestershire, on his way back to London, he visited Wren Park, and imparted strange tidings to his employer.

"So I went to Mr. Fairbank, the parson of Ewebridge," said the solicitor, continuing a report that need not be repeated at full, "when I found him altogether on Otway's side."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Gough's client. "The very parson who assured us that he himself read the funeral service over Guerdon?"

"Ay, and now he declares that the man really buried in Ewebridge church was no other than your second cousin, Reginald Albert Otway. The rector has opened vault and coffin, and found in the latter the embalmed body of a man that corresponds precisely to the portraits and known appearance of Martin Otway's son, and bears no resemblance to the claimant of Wren Park, either as he appears now with black hair, or as he appeared a few months since in law courts."

Mr. Gough had not anticipated the effect which this abruptly imparted intelligence would have on his client. Turning first deadly white and then scarlet with emotion, Frederick Sharpwell was seized with a violent fit of coughing. When the paroxysm had subsided, the invalid put his handkerchief to his mouth. Half a minute later he dropped backward in his chair. "Call Lottie—call Mrs. Sharpwell," he said, faintly. He knew that a blood-vessel of his lungs had given way.

Lottie was quickly by her husband's side; and at her bidding Mr. Gough drove at the fullest speed of a pair of carriage horses to Gloucester, where he telegraphed to London for Dr. Gilbertson.

In the interval between this event and the close of the next Michaelmas law term—an interval of five or six weeks—Frederick Sharpwell recovered considerably from the prostration immediately consequent on the rupture of the blood-vessel; but he could not execute his purpose of going up to town, to be present at the opening of the trial. He could not even leave his bed. In those same days, also, Lottie was fully informed of her husband's perilous condition. Ay, more, she learned that his state was worse than perilous. Speaking to her frankly and gently, Dr. Gilbertson told her that Frederick's days were numbered. He would not outlive the next winter. No, he would not survive it, even if he were sent out at once to Mentone.

Of course, Lottie wished to remain constantly at her husband's side. But he was so urgent that she should go up to London and give evidence against Albert Otway, that she yielded to his entreaties and her sense of her duty toward her children. In spite of the revelation at Ewebridge church, Frederick Sharpwell still insisted that the plaintiff was an impostor, whose fraud and madness would even yet be exposed by the woman whom Albert

Guerdon had loved. So Lottie consented to accomplish an odious task. She would go to town, see this hateful, wicked Mr. Otway in his new disguise, and, if she could do so, would bear witness against him. But what, oh, what, if she should discover him to be Albert Guerdon?

So Lottie wrote to her friend of many years' standing, Mrs. Dunwich, wife of Frank Dunwich, Equity draughtsman, and arranged that during her brief sojourn in town she should be Mrs. Dunwich's guest, at Westbourne Terrace. And in accordance with this plan, leaving her sick husband at Wren Park, she went up to London on a raw, foggy November day. She would not shrink from her part in the coming battle which was about to be fought, not for Frederick, but for his girls, who would soon be fatherless.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

ON the second day of sittings after Michaelmas term, the cause of Guerdon *vs.* Sharpswell came on for hearing in the Court of Queen's Bench, which was densely crowded within five minutes of the hour at which its doors were opened to the eager public. The seats appropriated to "the Bar" were flanked by tightly packed groups of wig-wearing gentlemen, who grumbled to one another at their ill luck in failing to get places among the seated counsel, and were of opinion that no "layman" should be allowed to sit in a court of justice, while a single lawyer in his robes was without a seat appropriate to his degree. The public, on the benches behind the stuff-gownsmen, maintained that barristers, not engaged in the suit, ought not to be treated better than other people.

Albert had selected for the chief of his leaders Sir Joshua Wigsworth, Q. C., a tall, slightly built, showy, foppish gentleman, with keen black eyes, pallid complexion, thin cheeks, hooked nose, sarcastic lips, and a large pair of dyed-black whiskers. To see Sir Joshua Wigsworth in his silk gown, snowy bands, white wig, and lawn wristbands, was to think how well his picture would look a century hence, in the gallery of a county hall, amidst other "portraits of my ancestors." No man at the Common Law Bar had a more aristocratic presence, or cleverer tongue, than Sir Joshua. It was a subtle, flippant, bitter, cruel tongue. Always fluent and persuasive, it could be gentle, tender, pathetic. But Sir Joshua was happiest and strongest when duty required him to denounce, with mingled indignation and scorn, as a prodigy of human baseness, some unfortunate litigant who had only perpetrated a foolish blunder. It sometimes disturbed moralists to see how pleasantly Sir Joshua could drink wine with a man whom he had a week earlier declared "a creature who had forfeited every claim to sympathy." Sir Joshua had

been an attorney-general. He meant to be a lord-chancellor. In politics and private life he was an amiable, generous, and punctiliously honorable gentleman. In Westminster Hall he was an advocate.

Throughout the whole of the first day of the trial Sir Joshua Wigsworth held the attention of the court—judge, jury, and "the public"—with a masterly speech in which, after briefly stating the names and parentage of plaintiff and defendant, and the main question in dispute, he gave a perfect sketch of Albert Guerdon's life, from its commencement in Boringdonshire, to the hour when he entered the Court of Queen's Bench to make good his title to Wren Park, Gloucestershire. As the readers of these pages know all that Sir Joshua could tell about the claimant's history, there is no need to give a report of the learned counsel's speech. Coming from the most historic of advocates, it was, of course, rich in theatrical points. Having set forth the circumstances of Albert's boyhood, and stated how and where he was educated for commercial life, it touched upon his return from the Continent to Earl's Court; and after mentioning his engagement to a daughter of Sir James Darling, a gentleman honorably remembered by many lawyers, it described his sudden passage from felicity to utter wretchedness, on the failure of Guerdon & Scrivener's bank. The jury were then told the considerations that induced the plaintiff to assume a false name and disguise on entering the profession, in which he had arrived at high distinction, and acquired the means which, to his lasting honor, he had expended in paying his father's debts, principal and interest, to the last farthing. His sublime devotion to his father's memory, and the fine sense of honor which he had manifested in dealing with his father's creditors, could not fail to win for him the admiration of the jury, and make them see that—though he had employed a few extraordinary artifices to shield his father's memory, to compass the happiness of the woman he had loved better than his own life, and to achieve his glorious enterprise of filial love—he was a man of lofty integrity. Human nature must be unmade, every law of it reversed, and each of its sacred and most delicate forces be annihilated, ere it would be possible for a man to live and labor with heroic courage and unselfishness as the plaintiff had done, and then come forward to plunder a kinsman of his property by lies and perjuries for which the annals of crime furnished no parallels.

When he sat down at 4.15, on a cheerless November day, after the utterance of this address, Sir Joshua was rewarded with a round of cheers by his hearers. The reporters for the press said that the applause was immediately suppressed, by which they meant that it was suppressed as soon as possible. The orator had made an extraordinary impression on his audience. With the exception of the defendant's lawyers, the indignant ushers, and the fat

juryman who had slept soundly during the latter half of the speech, there was not a man in court who would not have liked to shake the plaintiff's hand and offer to fight any body for him. In justice to the counsel who had spoken so effectively, it should be stated that, had it been his interest to do so, he would have shown that Albert Guerdon, a liar and an impostor by his own confession, was one of the meanest and most vindictive sneaks that had ever roused disgust. And Sir Joshua would have "worked this other side of the case" so effectively that Albert would have scarcely dared to leave Westminster Hall without a body-guard of policemen to protect him from the violence of the mob. As it was, every body wanted to be Mr. Guerdon's friend. As it might have been, even Harold Cannick would not have dared to invite him to a dinner-party "until the affair had blown over."

The first witness called on the following day was the plaintiff himself, who, on entering the witness-box, was far from imagining that he stood under the gaze of the very woman whom he had for years mourned for as dead.

Though Mrs. Sharpswell, during the preceding fortnight, would fain have persisted in thinking the plaintiff a malicious and mad impostor, the news from Boringdonshire had greatly shaken that conviction, and disposed her to take another view of the claimant's case. The report of Sir Joshua Wigsworth's opening speech had still further influenced her mind. On the second day of the trial, she took her place in the ladies' gallery, by the side of Mrs. Dunwich, prepared to see in the witness-box a gentleman who, besides bearing a striking resemblance to her first lover, should be found to be in fact Albert Guerdon. When he entered the box, and stood before her, all doubts as to the identity of her husband's cruel enemy with John Guerdon's son vanished. A shudder ran through her frame as she beheld him. There he stood, differing from the Albert who had won her heart only as the man of middle age differs from the person he was in early manhood. There was the same figure, only more stalwart; the same features, only bolder and harder; the same hair, with bright short curls overshadowing the broad forehead; the same eyes—dark, powerful as ever they were. In no particular did he strike her as resembling the close-cropped, close-shaven Mr. Otway of the Chancery Bar. In every respect he was Albert Guerdon. He spoke—with Albert's voice! Mrs. Dunwich saw the signs of her companion's agitation and manifest recognition of the plaintiff, but like a sensible woman she appeared unobservant of them.

It is not wonderful that Albert had heard nothing in Boringdonshire to dispel his impression that she was dead. Had he been told then that Mrs. Sharpswell was a daughter of the late Sir James Darling, he would only have supposed that his second cousin had married Lottie's elder sister. But knowing that he had been

in old times engaged to Mrs. Sharpswell, the Boringdonshire people, out of delicacy, had forbore to mention the lady to him, thinking that, as a matter of course, he would not like to be reminded of his old relation to the woman whose husband he was preparing to deprive of a fine estate.

Having been duly sworn, Albert Guerdon was soon passing through his examination-in-chief. Lawyers are seldom better givers of evidence than doctors, who labor under the reputation of being the worst of all witnesses in a court of justice; but Albert, by the directness, clearness, and brevity with which he replied to Sir Joshua Wigsworth's questions, soon showed his hearers that he at least would prove a good witness. And the plaintiff was confident that he would figure no less advantageously in the witness-box, when he should come to be cross-examined by the defendant's leader, Sir Philip Gale, Q.C. He had no fear of making the blunders that would discredit his testimony, and expose him to suspicion, if not to ignominious defeat. Unlike the many honest witnesses whose powers, never vigorous or rightly disciplined, have been weakened by self-indulgence or depressing circumstances, he possessed a memory singularly clear and retentive of its earliest impressions. All the influences of his life had been favorable to the preservation and enlargement of his faculties. Sorrow, which torpifies many minds, had only quickened and strengthened his intellect.

Answering question after question, he told the court all the story of his youth and early manhood. In every particular it was the old story which had before been told to Lottie by the same lips and voice, though in other and fuller terms. All went smoothly in the examination-in-chief until, the witness's engagement to Sir James Darling's daughter having been brought under consideration, Sir Joshua Wigsworth asked the witness,

"Is that lady still living?"

Witness. "No, she is dead."

Counsel. "Can you state the year of her death?"

Witness (having given the year in which Lottie's elder sister died). "That was the year of her death; it was the twenty-sixth year of her age."

Observing glances, and then words, pass quickly between Sir Philip Gale and Sergeant Taylor, and the defendant's junior counsel, Mr. Sparkleton, Sir Joshua looked again at his brief, and then asked if the witness had said "the twenty-sixth year of her age."

Witness. "I said the twenty-sixth."

Sir Joshua was annoyed. Sir Philip Gale winked his eye at Sergeant Taylor, and the Sergeant winked in return. Seeing that he had said something which contradicted the briefs of the counsel on both sides, Albert coolly turned over some papers of memoranda which he had before him, and, taking up a sheet of black-edged paper with a scrap of printed paper upon

it, observed, "This is the announcement of the lady's death in the *Times*. I cut it from the paper at the time, and put it among my memoranda."

Sir Joshua was no better pleased, and, after his wont at moments of annoyance, he licked his thin lips with his long, sharp tongue; while Sir Philip Gale and Sergeant Taylor, not caring to wink again at each other, lest they should put the witness on his guard, exulted in their hearts. "By heavens!" they thought, "Mr. Otway, then, is an impostor. He has tripped—and what a scrape he has dropped into! He has engaged himself to the wrong daughter, and given her a wrong age. It was the elder one who died when she was twenty-eight, and when Mrs. Sharpswell was twenty-five years old. And that slip of a paper—obviously a misprint—shows the source of his misinformation. He has done for himself."

Sir Joshua Wigsworth (having looked at the printed announcement). "On consideration, you have no doubt that this printed announcement is an accurate record of the event?"

Witness. "No doubt whatever."

Sir Joshua. "It is not inaccurate as to the statement of age?"

Witness. "It is quite accurate."

Sir Joshua. "You have already said that Sir James Darling had two daughters, I believe?"

Witness. "Yes, I have said two daughters."

Sir Joshua. "And the lady to whom you were engaged—was she the elder, or the younger of the two daughters of Sir James Darling?"

Witness. "The younger."

Sir Joshua. "And what were her Christian names?"

Witness. "Charlotte Constance. She bore the same Christian names as her sister, but in a different order. The elder Miss Darling was Constance Charlotte."

Sir Joshua. "It is the death of Charlotte Constance that was announced in the *Times*?"

Witness. "Yes. The name of the lady who died in her twenty-sixth year was Charlotte Constance."

Sir Joshua Wigsworth was perplexed.

Sir Philip Gale and Sergeant Taylor were delighted. Sir Joshua had been doing their work for them. Each of the defendant's leaders saw his way to making much in cross-examination of this mistake about the two ladies. It could be shown that the claimant's imaginary knowledge of the lady to whom he declared himself to have been engaged was based on talk with Albert Guerdon and an inaccurate announcement in the *Times*. It was obvious to the defendant's counsel that, whereas the witness's mistake was due to the erroneous notice of the death, Sir Joshua's trip was the result of a true statement in his brief, which had been drawn by a person more familiar than Mr. Otway with the private story of the Darling family.

A smile suddenly played over Sir Joshua Wigsworth's pallid face, as he saw the explanation of the difficulty.

Sir Joshua. "Had you any other authority than this printed announcement for thinking the younger of Sir James Darling's daughters dead?"

Witness. "None. It satisfied me that the event had taken place."

Sir Joshua. "Can you state what became of Sir James Darling's other daughter?"

Witness. "I can not."

Sir Joshua. "Can you inform the jury whether she is living at the present time?"

Witness. "I can not."

"What a sly fox Wigsby is!" thought Sir Philip Gale and Sergeant Taylor and Mr. Sparkleton. Sir Joshua Wigsworth was known as Wigsby by his familiars at the Common-Law Bar. "He sees how to get his man out of the scrape, and put him on his legs in re-examination."

Lottie, of course, saw the explanation of the mistake. The answers, which had perplexed and irritated Sir Joshua Wigsworth, besides informing her that Albert had long thought her dead, showed her how the misconception had arisen. Though she was still resentful against her first lover for all the injuries he had done her husband, it was a joy to her to know that he had never suspected how every injury to Frederick Sharpswell was a blow to Sir James Darling's youngest daughter.

As he stood in the witness-box, at cross-purposes with his own counsel, it occurred also to Albert that he might have mistaken the dead lady for the living one. Was it possible that a printer's error had declared the dead lady younger by three years than she was, and had also misplaced her two Christian names? As this thought flashed upon him, it struck him that he had been strangely imprudent and rash in trusting so completely to a single statement in a single newspaper. And yet his confidence was not strange. Every day of our lives we act without misgiving on evidence no more reliable than this false testimony of Lottie Darling's death.

The whole day, from ten A.M. to a quarter-past four P.M., with the exception of the short break in the middle of the day for luncheon, was spent on Albert's examination-in-chief. Had not Sir Joshua been a quick examiner and Albert a ready witness, the examination would not have been concluded when the Court rose. But at a quarter-past four the plaintiff's leader intimated that for the present he had no more questions to put to his client. And then, while the assembly was breaking up with hum and hubbub, Albert, before he stepped down from the witness-box, raised his eyes, and looking at the ladies' gallery, saw, in the murky light of the hot, vapor-abounding court, a face which made him start with astonishment. It was the face of a lady, who dropped her veil instantly on seeing that she was recognized by the plaintiff.

Leaving the chamber of justice quickly, Albert pushed his way through crowded passages

to the door, opening into a narrow corridor, through which he knew that the ladies would pass on descending from the galleries. Three minutes more, and he was standing face to face with Mrs. Sharpswell, who, on leaving her seat and preparing to descend a darksome stair-way, had again raised her veil.

"Good heavens! Lottie, how is this?" Albert asked, in a low tone.

No sound came in reply; but, turning dead-white, and trembling with agitation, Mrs. Sharpswell moved her lips in the vain endeavor to say "Albert." For ten seconds she gazed in silence into Albert's dark, burning eyes, and then, looking quickly round to a gentleman who was in attendance on her and Mrs. Dunwich, she said, quickly,

"Mr. Dunwich, lead me to the carriage—take me to the carriage at once. I am not well—I faint!"

Standing aside, so that Mr. Dunwich might do her bidding promptly, Albert saw Lottie led to a carriage that was waiting for the two ladies in Westminster Hall Yard. He saw the carriage drive quickly away, leaving Mr. Dunwich on the ground whence it started. In a trice Albert, who was known to Mr. Dunwich, confronted the Equity draughtsman.

"In Heaven's name, Dunwich!" he exclaimed, imploringly, "tell me who is the lady with your wife?"

Bowing stiffly, Mr. Dunwich answered,

"She is Mrs. Sharpswell, the wife of my old friend, Fred Sharpswell, of Wren Park."

"Lord have mercy on me!" ejaculated Albert. "She is Lottie—my own Lottie!"

"I have said," returned the Equity draughtsman, grimly, "that she is Mrs. Sharpswell. I may add, that she is the surviving daughter of the late Sir James Darling."

"Dunwich, you think ill of me!"

"I am Fred Sharpswell's old friend, and Mrs. Sharpswell is very intimate with my wife."

"Come away from this place," Albert entreated. "We are observed. Accompany me to the park, and let us talk together for ten minutes."

Mr. Dunwich consented. And for half an hour the two lawyers, in the deepening twilight of the end of a dull day, walked to and fro in a quiet pathway of St. James's Park. During which time Albert told his companion how he had, till that hour, been ignorant of Mrs. Sharpswell's identity with Sir James Darling's daughter, and that, of course, every statement made by him in court had represented precisely his knowledge or misconceptions. Assuring his hearer that Lottie was as dear to him as ever she had been, and that he would, of course, cease at once to prosecute his claim to the estate in her husband's possession, the wretched and confounded man begged that he might be allowed to see Lottie for ten minutes in the coming evening. Whereupon, seeing that no evil and much good might ensue to Fred Sharpswell's wife and children from the

proposed interview, Mr. Dunwich gave Albert leave to call in Westbourne Terrace at nine o'clock, and ascertain whether Lottie would receive him.

"Of course I can't say what her wishes may be, but you can call at my house at nine, and take your chance of seeing her," Mr. Dunwich observed, as he shook Albert's hand, and went away."

During the next few hours Albert underwent such anguish of mind and heart as even he, with all his woeful experiences, had never before suffered.

If he had been appropriately punished for his impostures by the humiliation of knowing that the false name and parentage which he had assumed were marked with irremovable stains of infamy, he was now cruelly, though justly, requited for his malignant persecution of his enemy by the discovery of Lottie's marriage to Frederick Sharpswell. Every blow which he had given Sharpswell had struck her with barbarous violence. In wounding him daily, he had been stabbing her as frequently. In crushing and grinding him to powder, he had destroyed her domestic prosperity, and filled her loving heart with terrifying anxieties for her children. Heavens! that his malice should have ruined her husband's fortune and health. That he, to whom she was so completely and unutterably dear, should have murdered her peace, and rendered her a miserable woman! And what had Sharpswell done to justify the virulence of his hatred of him? Sharpswell had never slandered, never even thought unkindly of John Guerdon; and yet it was for that imaginary offense that John Guerdon's avenger, forsooth, had ruined him at the Bar, and degraded him in society. At length the moment had come when Albert's hatred of his kinsman perished suddenly and utterly from his generous nature. In truth, Frederick Sharpswell had been neither blameless nor unoffending. He had at the outset been an overbearing rival and insolent antagonist. Under a misapprehension, he had directed against Albert the rage which he nursed against his other second cousin. Had his strength equaled his malignity, he would have injured Albert even more than Albert had injured him. But Albert was quite oblivious of these facts, now that his moral nature had thrown off the poison of spite and enmity. Fred Sharpswell had become to him only the man whom he had persecuted wrongfully and atrociously. Frederick Sharpswell was his kinsman and Lottie's husband; and yet he, Albert Guerdon, after striving for years to crush him and grind him to powder, was even then engaged in an attempt to beggar him, his wife, and his children.

Lottie received Albert, when he called at Mr. Dunwich's house in Westbourne Terrace. Again they were together in the same room. There was no need for him to explain the circumstances and aims of his impostures, or the accident which had made him suppose her to

be dead. Nor was it for him to palliate his sins against her husband—offenses for which, with manly contrition, he implored her pardon, and also besought her to procure Frederick Sharpswell's forgiveness. He made no single reference to the happy days when they might innocently speak to one another of a mutual love, which even yet lived in the breast of the loyal wife, and which had never permitted him to love another woman, although he was certain of her death. But though he spoke no word about that old time, and bore himself during the interview with a certain formality of manner that accorded ill with the tenderness of his voice, and with his earnest entreaties for forgiveness, Lottie knew that he still loved her; and she was happy in the knowledge that his fidelity proved him worthy of the place which he had occupied in her heart throughout her days of wedded life. But let no one wrong her by imagining that, even for an instant, she regarded her old lover as a man who might, under any conceivable circumstances, become her husband. Though he stood before her, a breathing and feeling man, he was as much as ever separated from her—by the death which he had feigned, and by the love with which Frederick had inspired her. The true woman and loyal wife, who had never ceased to think tenderly of Albert ever since they parted long ago in Boringdonshire, was not tempted to entertain toward him a thought that she would shrink from confessing to her dying husband, or would blush to tell her girls when they should become women.

On the following day Mrs. Sharpswell returned to Boringdonshire, with a note to her husband from Albert.

"Dear cousin," ran the epistle, "your wife will tell you all that she has learned in London, and all that has passed between her and me. I will not trouble you with many words. It is enough for me to beg, with lively contrition, for your forgiveness of the many grievous wrongs I have done you—wronges for which I am absolutely without an excuse that I could venture to state in palliation of my utterly extinguished hatred of you. Cease, I entreat you, to think of me as your enemy. Regard me only as a kinsman desirous of making every atonement in my power for the injuries I have done you, your wife, and children. Mrs. Sharpswell will tell you my proposal with respect to the estate. Do accede to it. It will, in every way, be better that you should leave the property to her and the children, than that they should receive it directly from me. Heaven knows I have no right to ask your consideration in this matter, but I rely on your generosity. Your cousin—ALBERT GUERDON."

As Lottie traveled back to Wren Park, she thought chiefly of her husband, but sometimes of Albert. He had begged her to forgive him for the sorrow he had occasioned her. It seemed to her that there was scarcely any thing in respect of which he should thus implore her par-

don. His imposture had been committed chiefly for her sake. If he had wronged Frederick, he had done so in ignorance that he was her husband. In respect to the grief he had caused her unwittingly, was he not rather to be pitied as a sufferer, than blamed as a doer of evil? He had never thought unjustly of *her*; whereas she, in her blindness, had for years deemed *him* an unspeakably wicked man. Reflecting on this strange and galling fact, Mrs. Sharpswell came to the conclusion that she had more need of Albert's forgiveness than he had of hers.

Loving her husband loyally, she had felt his failure and disgrace acutely—far more acutely than she had ever allowed herself to admit even to *herself*. The bitterest shame that a wife can endure is shame for her husband; and though Mrs. Sharpswell never experienced positive shame for her husband, her wifely pride had been grievously wounded by his defeats. It comforted her, as she journeyed back to Gloucestershire, to reflect that, if he had been conquered in the long battle with his rival, he had been beaten by so grand and generous a victor as Albert, with whom no man of only average powers could contend for even a single day.

On the day (Saturday) of Mrs. Sharpswell's return to Wren Park, the trial was not continued in the Court of Queen's Bench, as the chief justice was required to be present at Windsor. And when the public assembled in the chamber of justice at ten o'clock A.M., on Monday, they were not a little irritated to learn that the dispute, from which they had anticipated so much amusement had been settled. Sublimely indifferent to loss of fees, Sir Joshua Wigsworth had the greatest pleasure in informing his "Indship" that an arrangement had been made by his client and Mr. Sharpswell. No less magnanimous than the pallid leader of the Common-Law Bar, Sir Philip Gale had much pleasure in announcing that his client had received the most conclusive proof that the plaintiff, as his second cousin, Albert Guerdon, had an indefeasible right to Wren Park. So the cause fell lifeless, like a bird that drops dead under the aim of an unseen marksman at the very moment when it has spread its wings for flight. Some of the public were of opinion that litigants should not be allowed to trifle with public expectation, and that, having begun a fight, they should be compelled to fight it out. The jury thought otherwise.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN EARLY SUMMER'S DAY.

To Albert Guerdon's letter Frederick Sharpswell replied with words alike magnanimous and delicate. He could not consent to accept the estate which his victor pressed upon him. In declining the gift for himself, he declined nothing, for he knew the time was very near when no wealth could enrich him; and as for his

wife and children, for whom his futile labors had made no provision, he preferred that his second cousin should be their immediate benefactor. But, while refusing the estate, he promised to remain at Wren Park for the brief remnant of his days. "Allow me to be indebted to you for an asylum;" he observed, graciously, "and when I die, think of me, not as your old enemy, but as the kinsman who breathed his last under your roof." If he did not live nobly, at least Frederick died like a gentleman. Successive defeats having crushed his natural insolence, he displayed, under the subduing influence of approaching death, a manly fortitude and affectionateness. To his wife and children he had never been wanting in love and consideration, and now, in his concern for them, the broken man entertained grateful feelings for his former enemy, who would be their protector. His feud with Albert had originated in a mistake, and been fed by misunderstandings; and now that the mistake had been corrected, and the misunderstandings explained, he could be both just and generous to his conqueror.

He could even remark without jealousy the significant delight which his wife displayed at his change of feeling to her first lover—ay, more, he could without bitterness imagine that even yet Lottie might be tempted to fulfill the promise which she had made to Albert in her girlhood; and, in order that no sense of loyalty to his memory might in coming time militate against her happiness, he had the fine feeling to speak to her certain words, which, in the event of such a temptation, might weaken her power to resist it.

"Years hence my lucky cousin will enjoy himself as lord of Wren Park," Frederick said to his wife one December evening, when an intermission of his cough had given him a few minutes of comparative ease.

"You wish him to be happy?" Lottie inquired, anxiously.

"I wish him every happiness," Frederick answered, slowly and impressively—"ay, every happiness that he may desire now, or at any future time." After a pause, the dying lawyer added, "And Wren Park is not the only property which will come to him when my intermediate estate in it has terminated."

"What property is that, Fred?" Lottie inquired, with a look of surprise.

"Oh, no matter," was the answer. "You'll know some day."

If Lottie saw the direction of these words at the time of their utterance, she did not permit herself to apprehend their full significance. But the time came when she remembered them to her comfort.

And while Frederick Sharpswell was thus moving along the downward path to death, there was a stir in Boringdonshire among the many people of that county who were desirous of showing their respect for Albert Guerdon in a memorable manner.

Refusing again to be the hero of an ordinary

demonstration, Albert informed the leaders of these good folk that the only tribute of respect that he could accept would be their expression of a sincere belief in his father's honesty. At the same time, he placed in their hands the conclusive testimony that his father could not have signed the forged power of attorney at Hammerhampton on the day alleged in the spurious document. And, together with this evidence of his father's innocence of participation in that fraud, he gave his friends a written argument and other proofs, which rendered it indisputable that John Guerdon had not, either by act or connivance, been an accomplice in Scrivener's crimes.

Whereupon a committee of the chief capitalists of the Great Yard and the nobility of Boringdonshire produced a grandly illuminated record of their unqualified belief in John Guerdon's integrity.

"Whereas," ran this document, engrossed on vellum, "in the year 184—, the bank of Messrs. Guerdon & Scrivener, bankers, of Hammerhampton, Boringdonshire, failed, under circumstances that occasioned many persons of the said county and elsewhere to harbor unjust suspicions of the commercial integrity of John Guerdon, Esquire, late of Earl's Court, J.P. and D.L. of the said shire: *And whereas*, it has been demonstrated to us by sure evidence that the said gentleman, in respect to the failure of the said bank, and all matters affecting his honor injuriously, was the victim of a treacherous partner, We, the undersigned noblemen, magistrates, clergymen, manufacturers, merchants, and inhabitants of Boringdonshire, have much pleasure in declaring that no imputation of dishonor rests on the memory of the said Mr. Guerdon, of Earl's Court, whom, from our personal knowledge of his many merits, we commemorate as a loyal, upright, and benevolent gentleman."

To this brief statement was appended the name of every person of condition and respectability in Boringdonshire. And other things, which need not be mentioned particularly in this page, were done for the illustration of John Guerdon's worth, and for his son's gratification. Was not Albert presented with the freedom of Hammerhampton, and entertained in that city at a banquet, whereof the Earl of Slumberland, Lord-lieutenant of the County, was chairman, and whereat the Bishop of Owlesbury returned thanks for the Church? And has there not been recently erected on the chief square of Hammerhampton an illuminated clock of grand dimensions and unqualified ugliness, in memory of "the private virtues and public worth of John Guerdon, banker and benefactor of this town?" May not the good people of Hammerhampton, at any hour of the day or the night, read the motto, "Light out of Darkness," which appears on the face of the monstrous time-piece?

The snow was lying deep on the fat pastures of Gloucestershire some twelve weeks after

Albert Guerdon's appearance as a plaintiff in Westminster Hall, when he received from Mrs. Sharpwell this note:

"He died tranquilly this morning at six o'clock. In his last days he often spoke of you affectionately. It was only yesterday that, while his hand was in mine, he said, 'When it's all over, Lottie, tell Guerdon that I love him.' A minute later he added, 'I should like him to be at my funeral.'"

Need it be said that Albert obeyed this pathetic summons from the widow of his enemy, who had forgiven him? Since their reconciliation the two cousins had not met. But when Lottie, with trembling steps, approached the edge of the open vault in Wren church, to which her husband's coffin had been committed in her presence, she leaned on the arm of the other of the two men who had loved her.

Lottie wore mourning for her husband for two full years. And when she had laid aside the widow's weeds, there came at no long interval a day of early summer on which she passed from a period of afflicting recollections and feverish uncertainty to a life of serene and perfect gladness. Musical with the twittering of young birds under sunny eaves, the hum of insects, the noise of buds bursting into leaf, and all the murmurous sounds of Nature clothing herself with visible happiness, the day was fruitful of song and blithesome change in every copse and lane and garden of Gloucestershire. To the mistress of a stately mansion on the

Cotswold Ridge it was the gate-way to a new existence. The dew was still upon the grass, and the morning fresh as innocence when she walked from her house to the little church in the corner of Wren Park, and was privately married to Albert Guerdon in the presence of her four daughters. Thus the treasure in which Frederick Sharpwell had an intermediate estate fell to the man who had loved her in her girlhood. Mary Darling's prediction was fulfilled. After all, Albert and Lottie were husband and wife. As he knelt by Lottie's side in the rural church, after taking her for better and for worse, Albert remembered his last parting from her mother. Was it only an excited imagination which caused him to feel that Mary Darling's spirit witnessed his union with his child, and blessed it?

Albert is still a leader of the Equity Bar, and is as successful an advocate under his new name of Abbiss (assumed on the authority of Letters Patent) as he was under the name which he assumed on his own authority. Some six months since the *Times* announced the birth of an heir to Wren Park. And it is said by those who have known Mrs. Abbiss intimately since her first marriage that, though she loves her baby as dearly as ever she loved any precious infant of her own invention, she has more pleasure in nestling at Albert's feet in his study than in sitting beside her boy's *berceau-nette*. She is "a wife" rather than "a mother;" and yet she is an exemplary mother.

THE END.

THE TWO WIDOWS.

A Novel.

By ANNIE THOMAS,

(MRS. PENDER CUDLIP),

AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "CALLED TO ACCOUNT," "PLAYED OUT," "A PASSION
IN TATTERS," "THE DOWER HOUSE," "MAUD MOHAN," &c.



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Scott

THE TWO WIDOWS.

CHAPTER I.

HORATIA WALDRON.

FOR pathetic, quiet beauty, that would eventually beguile you into loving it, whether your heart yearns for a freer, bolder style or not, the English country may be challenged to produce a rival to Larpington. It spreads itself about in such peaceful, languid loveliness over the slopes that incline gently upward from the valley of the slowly-crawling Larp, that a feeling of lull comes upon one directly its soothing precincts are entered. Its broad pastures and spacious fields of corn, its well-surrounded mansions, its capital farm tenements, and, above all, its weather-tight and moderately roomy cottages, all speak of prosperity and plenty. Evidently the laboring population of Larpington live like human beings—they do not merely exist under worse conditions than the majority of us assign to (such as we have need of) the brute beasts that perish.

It matters very little which way Larpington is entered: the approaches to it are all beautiful. But the one from the west—the road that runs through a wooded slope for four miles, and then dips down to the banks of the Larp and leads right past the Bridge House into the village—is the most secluded, the most picturesque, and certainly the one a stranger would have been advised to take by Horatia Waldron if he were in quest of beauty.

Mrs. Waldron, at the date of which I am writing, was a widow, the mistress of the Bridge House, and in what people who did not know what her requirements were called “easy circumstances.” She always paid her rents and taxes, her butcher and baker. She was well

dressed, and those who had the *entrée* of the Bridge House declared that it was furnished with a degree of taste and beauty that must have cost fabulous sums. Nevertheless, and in spite of there being truth in this latter statement, Horatia Waldron was a poor woman, and her poverty galled her horribly.

Her occupancy of the Bridge House had extended over two years, and she was gradually doffing her weeds about the time of her introduction here. Her appearance two years before had created an enormous sensation in Larpington. As soon as she had been seen, there had been formed a faction for and a faction against her. She was not the type of person about whom any one could preserve a strict neutrality. As far as she herself was concerned, it was impossible to help liking her, and liking her warmly. But then she could not be accepted as an isolated fact. She had belongings, and she had righteous opponents; and both belongings and opponents influenced many against her.

She was past girlhood, and she was the mother of a pair of handsome, hearty children, but she had not developed into stout matronhood. She was a fully-formed, gracious woman, but her waist was slender and supple, and her step light, true, and active as it had been when first she stepped between Arthur Waldron and prosperity. Her sweet, oval, fair face was unfurrowed too, and there was not a silver thread in her very dark brown hair, nor a wrinkle round her long blue eyes that were so becomingly framed by their long black lashes. Altogether her ad-

mirers were quite justified in calling Mrs. Waldron a "very pretty young woman" still.

She was sitting in her pretty, tastefully-adorned room one Christmas-eve, waiting impatiently for the arrival of the coach from the market-town seven miles away. A visitor who would be her guest for a few days was coming; and as this visitor was her brother, and she had not seen him since her wedding-day, seven years before, her anxiety was a natural thing enough.

The leaping fire-light gleamed upon many fair things in that room—upon graceful statuettes and blooming flowers, and shining silver and crystal (for the dinner-table was set, and Mrs. Waldron's little room was dining-room and drawing-room in one). But it fell upon nothing fairer than the black-velvet-robed mistress of all, who kept on getting up and peering out into the road along which the coach must surely come presently.

Once or twice, instead of looking along the coach road, she sent a steady penetrating gaze across the valley, where, in the middle of a well-wooded undulating park, a hundred lights flashed out from what was emphatically *the* House of Larpington. If any one had been by to watch her, it would have been seen that her pale, mobile face flushed a little as she looked. But presently she turned away with a laugh, as two children hurled themselves into the room, regardless of the half-entreating, half-commanding voice of the nurse which was echoing behind them.

"Miss Flossy—Master Gerald—*do* come back; your ma don't want you, and she'll be fine and angry," that functionary was saying. But as the mother turned to catch her boy, the already night-gowned rebel saw that there was no reproof for him in that quarter, and Flossy gathered enough boldness from his air of conviction to ask—

"Ma'a-ma!" in two long drawn-out syllables, "isn't it always ladies first?"

"Yes," Mrs. Waldron said, encouragingly. "What is it, Flossy? Did Gerald want the first cup of milk, or the first bath, or what?"

"He wanted to say his prayers before me, and ladies must always be first, mustn't they, ma?" Flossy said, as coherently as her strong sense of injury in having been hurried in this matter would admit of her saying it.

On the whole, it seemed better to Mrs. Waldron to leave the question of female precedence undetermined, rather than to risk controversy on it.

"It's a very proper rule, and it's much oftener honored in the breach than the observance

—which is all very beautiful, but utterly beyond your understanding," the mother said, with a laugh. A proceeding which called forth a gentle, earnest, passionately pleading, "*Don't* you laugh, mother," from Flossy of four, and a blithe, easy-going, perfectly satisfied, and utterly irrelevant rider from Gerald of three.

"I'm a funny boy, I are; what you down here in the dark for? aren't you afraid of Jabberwock?" ("Alice, in Wonderland," be it understood, was the little Waldron's most familiar friend.)

"A real live Jabberwock is coming here by coach presently, who won't care for a view of your ripening beauties and a display of your dawning intelligence to-night, my dears. Now, my cubs, surge up stairs." And Mrs. Waldron made a besom of her sweeping skirts, and flung herself into the spirit of the eternal nursery poem of "Such a getting up stairs," in a way that would have seemed almost servile to any one who had never been cast for a similar part in the great drama of maternity.

As their rosy feet pattered out of sight on the topmost stair, as their resonant laughter rang through the balustrades above her head, Mrs. Waldron turned back into her pretty, fragrant room, and resumed her watch at the window, but with a different expression on her face. She was radiant with the flush and light of pride and glory in the bonny pair who had disturbed her so unceremoniously. And as her eyes went out and rested on the lights that gleamed out amidst the trees, and made all Larpington cognizant of the unusual festivity that was reigning at the house, her lips formed the words, though no sound emanated from them.

"It's all my boy's, all my clever little Gerald's!" And as she said it to herself, her heart swelled with an exultation that she did not for one moment scorn herself for feeling. Honestly, she had not a mean opinion of herself, because she thoroughly appreciated all the prospective advantages of being the mother of the future owners of The House and the Larpington property.

She had hardly time to get impatient again before the cutting trot of the four horses that drew the coach was heard on the hill. In another minute it pulled up, with a considerable amount of too-hooing, caused by a struggle between a boy and a horn, at the hall door, and then, with a sigh of relief, she turned from the window, feeling sure that her brother Gilbert would be with her as soon as she was quite ready to receive him.

For the pretty graceful widow was essentially a practical person. She had not the well-oiled machinery at command which she would have liked to have brought into use on this occasion of her brother's first visit to her. A well-filled purse is needful for the perfect working of such machinery, and Horatia Waldron's purse was but scantily lined. But still, she was so accustomed to have every thing fair and decent in her every-day life, that, almost without design, she had organized a reception for this brother that could not fail to strike him pleasantly if he possessed either eyes, taste, or a heart.

In a moment she had lighted the candles on the little round dining-table—red wax-candles that stood out superbly against the white cloth and silver that was polished until it looked black in the curves. "He'll wonder where he's to take his after-dinner port, and where he's to smoke, and where he's to write his business letters," she thought, with a laugh. "I'll show him how well he can do it here in this cabinet, until his nephew can receive him at The House." This thought imparted more than usual elasticity to her step; it was almost with a bound that the young widow Waldron crossed the little hall, and made her way into the kitchen.

It took her about five minutes to taste, and stir, and season every thing that was already prepared, into the last stage of perfection. The white soup, the well-hung leg of Dartmoor mutton, the boiled chicken and mushroom-sauce, the wild duck, and the plain pudding were each and all "successes." And feeling sure of this, she went back to receive and welcome her rich, fastidious brother with a light heart.

For she wanted to please him. It was needful for her well-being that her brother, Gilbert Denham, should incline favorably toward her. And if a daintily-devised and prepared dinner would make him more amenable to her advances, was she not justified, as woman and mother, in so devising and preparing it?

She stood waiting under the shade of the dark ruby velvet *portierre*, the light of the candles behind her showing her figure out well, as her brother, with a great rush of fresh, frosty air, and a great bustle of portmanteau, and hamper, and traveling-case, and strapped-up rug, came into the little hall. He was half-blinded, half-dazzled. Somehow or other he had expected something utterly different. He blinked away the surprise and the steam which had coagulated on his eyelashes in a moment, though, and exclaimed,

"Why, Horry, how well you look! A prettier woman, by Jove! than you were the day that you made that little mistake!"

He had divested himself of his big frieze coat while he was speaking, and she led him into her small, luxurious room before she ventured to make any reply. Then she put her hands on his shoulders, and made him face her fully as she said,

"Do you want me to go on loving you as I have always loved you, Gilbert?"

"Yes; what's the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing. Am I crying? What a fool I am to do it when I want to look my prettiest for you! Don't speak of my marriage as a mistake, Gilbert. I was very happy while Arthur lived, and I'm happy now with two rather nice cubs; and I shall be happiest of all when I see my little Gerald *there*. And as she spoke the last words she drew the window-curtain back, and pointed out The House flashing out at all points to her brother.

"Ah, well!" he said, calmly following the direction of her hand with his eyes, but going on quietly wiping down his big beard and mustache all the while; "not a bad place, is it, eh? Hope your little man will get it in time. But hadn't you better see about having that hamper unpacked? Mrs. Denham stuffed every thing into it that she could lay her hands on in the larder; and, by-the-way, she sent her love, and hoped you wouldn't be offended at her sending it at all."

"Why wouldn't she come with you, Gilbert?"

Horatia asked the question gravely, and gravely her brother contemplated her before he spoke. Then he said,

"She staid away—much as she wished to see you—for your sake, little woman. I had to give her the hint to do it. My wife is one of the best creatures in the world; but it wouldn't improve your position with the woman in The House up there for it to get abroad, down here, that Mr. Gilbert Denham was one of your nearest of kin."

"Gilbert, I'm ashamed of you!" his sister broke out, passionately. "From the moment of her coming into it, Bessie has been good, true, generous, and loving to every member of our family; and as to 'that woman up there'—do you think I can—"

"Now stop, don't go off with that high-falutin," he laughed, good-temperedly. "Bessie won't misunderstand you for a minute, and you must care about complicating your position in the eyes of that woman. By-the-way, has she asked us to dine with her to-morrow?"

"No; but she actually came down and excused herself for not doing so. She said her table was full, and she was sure it would be so much pleasanter for me to be alone with you after such a long separation."

"She's right there," Mr. Denham said, in a satisfied tone, as the soup went off. The keynote was struck in a way he liked. After such soup, it was not at all likely that any portion of the dinner would be flat, tame, and unprofitable.

"She's right there; but still, if she does not invite me, you must invite her."

"And she won't come."

"Does she never come?"

"Yes, to pay a state call sometimes. It makes me sick to see her horses prancing outside my little garden gate, and to hear her carriage door bang, and to see her servants' liveries. They all sound of money—gleam and shine with money."

"But she never comes to partake of your elegant but unpretentious hospitality?"

"I have never been idiotic enough to invite her."

"My dear Horry, you're right, quite right. Not but what I see you could give her as good a dinner as her *chef* could possibly turn out up there; but that's not the point. I'm glad you have not been in the habit of interchanging unnecessary civilities. Custom would clog and hamper us if you had; and when I begin to deal with Mrs. Waldron, of Larpington House, I don't mean to be clogged and hampered by any thing."

"Oh!" Horatia burst out, with one of her sudden glows of enthusiasm, "when you've dined—I mean when you've rested—you must come up and see the children. The boy you're going to work for will inspire you—"

"Not a bit of it," her brother laughed out, cheerfully. "The thought that I may be the means of exploding a fraud and ousting an impostor will inspire me. However, I'll go and look at the young ones presently. I suppose you like them?"

He was a handsome, tall, stalwart man, this Gilbert Denham. Clever, too, and courageously resolved upon taking his own way, whenever his own way seemed good to him. Some years before Horatia's marriage with the youngest son of the Waldrons of Larpington, he had been in practice in London as a solicitor. While there, he had arranged some business matters sharply and satisfactorily for the wealthy widow of a city man; and by-and-by he had married her, and had ever since been uniformly

happy with her, though some of his former friends insisted on regarding him as a man who was marred by his marriage.

Circumstances had induced Gilbert Denham to go abroad soon after his sister Horatia's wedding; and circumstances had kept him there until just before this story opens. This fact must be taken into consideration when it is stated that he knew very little of the conditions of her life at Larpington.

"Had you any suspicion before Arthur died, or had Arthur himself any suspicion, that it was not all fair and above-board with his brother's widow?" Mr. Denham asked, as he sipped his wine, and forgot to wonder (as she had expected he would) "why Horry didn't go into another room." "Not the very slightest; and if Arthur had, he never told me. But he never saw her, you must remember that."

"And what induced you to come and settle here when you heard that the place was left to her, and that your boy was cut out of it?"

"Instinct, inspiration; I don't know what it was made me come. I was so wretched when he died that I wanted to be *more* wretched; don't you know the feeling? It's like pressing on a nerve when your tooth aches to make it ache more; don't you know?"

"I was never guilty of that special form of folly," he laughed; "but go on."

"Well, when I came and saw her, the instant I saw her I believed that I was brought here for Gerald's ultimate good. It flashed into my mind at once, and I think the flash was reflected on my face, that she hated my being here, that she had a motive for hating my being here, and that there was something wrong about her being in possession of Larpington House. That has been the steady conviction of my mind, Gilbert. I'm waiting here to find out how she won him to commit such an injustice, or how she got it committed if he didn't do it."

"Don't hint at her having forged a will, my dear," he said, coolly; "it might be unsafe to do so to any one but your devoted brother."

"That's all the story I have to tell, Gilbert," she answered, smiling, and calming down prettily at once; "but you look in that woman's face when she knows what you are, and judge for yourself if I have founded my story on fact or fiction."

"I'll do so, Horry, dear; and now take me to see your children. I'm glad you can put me up here. I half expected, from your way of speaking of your house, that I might be relegated to the village inn."

He followed her up, and she led him to the side of a crib, where a child, with its limbs tossed into every portion of the crib where they ought not to have been, and its long auburn hair floating over the pillow, was sleeping soundly.

"The future master of Larpington is a fine little fellow," he said, warmly.

"This isn't Gerald; my children are rather punctilious, and always insist on the rule of 'ladies first' being attended to. This is Flossy."

"And where's the boy?"

"Here's the boy," a clear treble answered from the other side of the room; and looking round, they saw Gerald, with wide-open eyes, taking in all the details of the scene. "What are you for? Are you come to play wild beast? Mamma's a pig sometimes, and I'm a bullock. You crawl on your stomach, and be an elephant, and I'll ride on your back."

"The plan is a remarkably pleasing one; but we won't carry it out just now," the uncle said, laughing. And then a hailstorm of questions fell from both children. "Who's the man?" "Is he here with mamma?" "What for, then?" "Has he any sweeties?" "Has he any dolls?" And so on until the chorus became a sleepy one, and the babies drifted off

into the happy fairy-land of dreams, while the elders went down and discussed some of the stern realities that were about them.

"Were your husband and his brother on friendly terms?" Gilbert asked, after a time.

"On very friendly terms. I never knew brothers more fondly attached than they were to each other. George Waldron had been more like a father to Arthur than a brother."

"Yet George Waldron went and married some woman whom he never saw fit to introduce to Arthur, and died without mentioning the fact of his marriage, and most unrighteously left all his property away from his brother's son. I don't understand it."

"What will you say when you have seen that woman?" Horatia cried, with a thrill. "You never read the reason in her face. She's utterly hateful."

"Peace on earth, good-will toward men!" chanted out the waits; and Horatia rose, saying,

"It's past midnight; I'll say good-night to you, Gilbert, dear, for I want to be intrenched in a stronghold of calm watchfulness when the meeting comes off to-morrow between Mrs. Waldron of Larpington House and little Gerald's clever friend."





CHAPTER II.

"THAT WOMAN."

THE distance from Mr. Arthur Waldron's house to the church was very short, but it was long enough for her to encounter the disturbing element of her life, as she trod it the next morning with her brother Gilbert. She heard it—she *felt* it coming before she saw it. There was a clear, clanging noise of horses' hoofs on the iron-bound ground, and the rolling carriage-wheels actually made the road quiver. "They are going to pass us," she said to her brother; "look at her, Gilbert."

He was by his sister's side on the raised path, and the carriage was close behind them as she said this. He had barely time to notice the extreme beauty and delicacy of the young widow's face, seen for the first time by daylight, before the other widow—the owner of The House—the great lady of Larpington was abreast of him. And he turned his head and looked at her.

The carriage was a light, well-built, double brougham; the horses, a pair of showy, high-stepping chestnuts; the harness, silver-mounted, and liberally adorned with the crest of the Waldrons. Every thing was well done, in so far as each individual thing being of the best material and best workmanship. But every thing was overdone—was ostentatiously done—was evidently suggested and ordered by the taste of some person, or persons, who liked to hear the chink of the red gold, and to see the gleam of it whenever occasion offered.

The brougham windows were closed, but on the side nearest to them a face was dimly visible through the glass. A large, checked, *steady* face. That was the sole impression on Gilbert Denham.

"That woman would do a thing very strongly," was the thought that was passing through his mind when his sister muttered,

"That was Mrs. Waldron; could you catch sight of her daughter?"

"Has she a child? No, I only saw one—lady." He hesitated slightly before speaking the last word, and his sister glanced at him triumphantly.

"She did not strike you as being 'a lady,' Gilbert. I'm sure she didn't; I had the same feeling the moment I saw her first."

"We're at the church door, dear," he answered, looking kindly down into her eager face; "let us leave envy, hatred, and malice outside."

"I haven't a spark of either in my composition," she hastily whispered in reply; "but—I'm Gerald's mother, and he has only me—and you."

As became the beauty and prosperity of Larpington, its church was a fine and handsome one. It had been erected early in the fifteenth century, and the ravages of time had been admirably and artistically restored by Arthur Waldron's father. Unfortunately, for the church, Mr. Waldron paused on the completion of the necessary massive repairs, and went over to the Roman Church, before any of the decorations and adornments could be designed and selected for the further beautifying of the edifice, that now always gave one the impression of wanting warmth and color. Nevertheless, though some things might with advantage have been different in Larpington church, there was also much that was fair and pleasant to behold. In the first place, there was a large congregation of really earnest-looking worshippers. In the next place, there were no high pews; and in the third place, there was a good outspoken, clear-headed, warm-hearted man to pray for and to preach to them.

Mrs. Arthur Waldron led the way to her seat, about the middle of the centre aisle, dropped

on her knees there, and tried to pray. Her heart ached with a strong sense of her own wickedness, as she felt in the midst of it that she *must* indicate to her brother the position of the Larpington House people. She *must*, for little Gerald's sake, give him every opportunity of seeing "That woman" on all sides.

"The long front seat—right under the reading-desk," she found herself whispering; "the violet velvet is the daughter."

The "violet velvet" indicated—at whom Gilbert Denham discreetly did not look in the face of the whole congregation—was the costume of a tall, well grown, shapely young woman, with a fine Napoleonic face. Lovers of refined beauty would have found this handsome girl wanting in most of the points of blood and breeding. But those who regarded stature and size, and firmness of flesh, as the most desirable qualifications, would have had nothing to wish for when gazing on Miss Emmeline Vicary's stalwart, healthy young figure, and clear complexioned, dauntless young face.

On the way home, Gilbert said,

"You never told me there was a daughter."

"No; I forgot her; she's not a Waldron, thank goodness, she's utterly unimportant," Mrs. Arthur Waldron answered, carelessly.

"Is she? my dear Horry, she's splendidly handsome, and no splendidly handsome woman is unimportant in this world."

The pretty graceful woman—who was to Miss Vicary as a gazelle is to a milch cow—looked up surprised into her strong, handsome brother's face.

"No! admire her, Gilbert—you have seen better things," with a little unconscious toss of her own pretty head; "but I don't want to talk about 'Melly,' as her mother calls her; did you look at Mrs. Waldron's face?"

"No; but I looked at Mrs. Waldron's hand, and her strongest card is her daughter."

Mrs. Arthur Waldron walked back to her orderly little home, where an exquisitely appointed little luncheon awaited them, in a bitterly disorderly spirit. It is always cruelly hard on a sister when a brother who is dear to her openly avows his admiration for a woman who is the very opposite of all she (the sister) considers excellent in woman. It is harder still when the admired woman may be one whose influence may be very deleterious if brought to bear upon the brother against the disapproving sister.

Accordingly, knowing this truth well, though she had never experienced the force of it yet, Horatia took off her bonnet in a sort of re-

signed way, and then went into the nursery and gathered her children about her for comfort.

It seemed hard to her—hard and horrible that with that boy of her's within call, her brother Gilbert should permit himself to think the daughter of that boy's natural enemy pleasant to look upon. To be sure, Gerald had exercised his gay fancy about his uncle at breakfast in a way that spoiled that gentleman's appetite. Gilbert Denham was not accustomed to have a pattern drawn on his back with yolk of egg, nor to have his slipper wrested from his foot, and see milk poured into it for "Tittums;" nor was the poetry of motion very apparent to him when his small nephew danced "a passion dance" because he was refused unlimited lumps of sugar. But though Gerald had been naughty, his mother believed in her innermost soul that he had been charming in his naughtiness. And it savored to her of evil witchcraft that her brother had been made to forget for a moment that the bulky beauty who had won commendation from him belonged to the household of the enemy of her boy.

Thinking of these things made her regardless of the rites of hospitality. She had been more than half an hour scrambling about the nursery floor playing their favorite game of "wild beasts" with her children, when her house-maid appeared, deferentially,

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I thought you were in the drawing-room all the time, till this minute. Mrs. Waldron and Miss Vicary are calling here."

She got up from her blithesome play with every nerve aching, every vein tingling with the firm conviction that this was a crisis in her destiny—not in her's, but in Gerald's. In Gerald's! A crisis in the destiny of the dark-eyed, winning faced darling now burying his head in her dress, and beseeching her not to go down to any nasty people, but to stay and play at Jabbawockes and buffaloes with him.

She was not at all addicted to the *tableaux vivants* business with her children. A charming actress, she never acted in real life *consciously*, though she was always getting wonderfully dramatic effects out of what would have seemed meagre materials to most people. But now she caught up her boy, and carried him down, kicking and struggling with pleasure, on her arm, and appeared before the trio a revised and improved "Medea," without Jason, and with only one child.

It has been said that she carried comfort and elegance into all the arrangements of her every-day life because these were essential to

her. That is to say, she would have them when she could; it would never have occurred to Horatia Waldron to go without them because no one was by to see that she had them. So now the scene upon which she entered was as fairly set as if she had expected an audience. It was all rosy, light, and floral fragrance, and order, and beauty, of the light, airy, graceful sort. And her brother Gilbert, her handsome, tall, alert, vigorous brother solidified it all, as it were, and gave it breadth and tangibility.

He was sitting easily on a chair a little way removed from two ladies who were on the couch, and to whom he was talking animatedly and well. Horatia felt with a pang almost that he was exerting himself to please them. To please them—those women who had ousted Gerald from his own.

She was in their midst almost before they saw that the door had opened, with the boy in her arms. But in a moment he was on the floor holding his mother's hand, trotting out toward them with the fearless unsuspicion of his age. It seemed like a little act from a play even to his mother, when, in answer to the elder visitor's question of, "Well, my dear, who are you?" the baby answered,

"I'm Gerald Waldron, of Larpington."

It was a formula taught him by his nurse in case he should ever be lost. But simple as it was, it brought the color to Mrs. Waldron's face.

"You've taught your little boy to speak plainly, I must say, Mrs. Arthur," she said, shaking hands with her hostess. And Horatia reared her head before the blast, as it were, and answered,

"Oh! yes; but he'll speak plainer by-and-by. I must apologize to you for not having been here to introduce my brother, Mr. Denham."

"We made out an acquaintance before you came in," Mrs. Waldron said, affably. "And now I hope you will overlook the want of ceremony in what Melly and I have done in quite a friendly way; we want you and your brother to come and dine with us to-night; there are many families from the neighborhood coming that I should really like to introduce you to."

She was a thorough woman! and while this speech was being spoken there was a sharp struggle in Horatia's breast. It was hard—it was pitiful—it was *unjustly* hard that she should be put in the position of the patronized one. This reflection obtained for about a moment. Then, of course, she remembered Gerald and all Gerald's claims upon her long-suffering and forbearance—for was she not his mother?

"Gilbert shall see all he can of the odious

pair," she determined. And then she answered, quite suavely and politely,

"I am sure we shall be very happy; may I answer for you, Gilbert?"

And Gilbert, rather briskly, told her "Yes, she might."

The guests rose to remove themselves as soon as they had ascertained that their hospitality was accepted. As they got up and made for the door, it seemed to slender Horatia that the room was full of them—they were so lavishly endowed, both by nature and art. Their tall frames seemed to stretch up to the ceiling, and their voluminous skirts filled the room. "Are they camels, or elephumps, mamma?" little Gerald, whose mind was fraught with "wild beasts," asked.

No wonder that practical little Gerald asked the question. They were a brace of "fine women," undoubtedly, those two, who were just making their exit. They were singularly alike, too, at the first glance, though on closer inspection there were many marked points of difference between them. They were alike in being tall, in being shapely, and in having a free, easy, assured carriage. They were alike in having a strong expression of determination stamped upon their faces. But they were utterly unlike each other in manner and coloring. The daughter, although she missed the more delicate touches of breeding and blood, had about her a wealth of repose. The mother was restless and watchful. The daughter had gray eyes, and smooth, straight masses of hazelnut-colored hair, and a complexion that was white and opaque as milk. The mother's flashing black eyes, crisp, curly black locks, and transparent olive cheeks might have enabled her to pass for a gypsy. Again, the daughter looked older than the twenty years with which she was accredited in Larpington; while the mother looked younger than she could possibly be to have such a daughter.

They were both handsomely and elaborately dressed—Mrs. Waldron in black velvet and sable, and Miss Vicary in the before-mentioned violet velvet, about which were soft bands of chinchilla. Altogether they were a striking pair; and Horatia saw with a sickening sense of chargin, that as women her brother thought them far from contemptible.

"I wonder why they want to get hold of you," she began, as soon as they were gone.

"I can't get up a wonder about your sister-in-law asking us to dinner," Gilbert answered, carelessly. "Don't get into the habit of believing there is a motive and a mystery in their

simplest actions. If you do that, you'll abolish all chance of any real mystery which there may be ever being arrived at."

"It's a relief to hear you speak in that way. Gilbert, even you admit the possibility of their being a real mystery. I was afraid they had cast such a glamour over you that you would doubt every thing but their integrity."

"That's another erroneous conclusion," he said, with a laugh. And then little Gerald was sent to his nursery, and the brother and sister sat down to luncheon.

"It's so bright and clear; shall we go out and have a look at the place, Gilbert?" Mrs. Waldron asked, when the luncheon had been removed, and her brother had changed his position five or six times, and stifled five or six yawns, after the manner of busy men who are suddenly transplanted into a soil in which they find nothing to do.

"Yes, if you like. What place?"

"Why, the place that ought to be Gerald's—Larpington House and Park," she replied, quickly.

He laughed. "Your maternal faith in Gerald's right divine to the property is very beautiful, Horry dear. With all my heart I hope he may be the rightful heir, and not a mere young pretender; but from what I heard at the time, the terms of George Waldron's will were very explicit."

"They were," she said, sadly. "Every thing was clearly and unconditionally left to his wife. He must have been under a hideous spell," Horatia went on, waxing wroth at the mere recollection of the wording of the will. "He must have been mad; he must have been coerced into dictating such incomprehensible maudlin folly. He would 'leave it to the good angel of his life to be the good angel of his family, feeling sure that in all things she would carry out his wishes.' That was all the care he took of his brother and his brother's boy."

"It *was* incomprehensible, maudlin folly," Gilbert Denham said, thoughtfully. "Called that woman his good angel, did he? I wish we could find out some of the friends of the departed Vicary. Let us hope that good cheer and the relaxing influences of the season will induce her to give us a clue to-night."

They went out soon after this, and when they were clear of the village they turned down the valley, and skirted the boundary-wall of Larpington House. Occasionally they got glimpses of the fine, square, red-brick pile through the thick belts of forest-trees; and at last Mr. Denham asked,

"Does the inside correspond with the exterior? There ought to be fine galleries and saloons in a house like that."

"You'll hardly believe it, Gilbert, when I tell you that I only know the hall and a drawing-room. I have never been asked to go into the picture-gallery—nor into any of the other rooms, for that matter. But the picture-gallery, where there are portraits of Arthur's father and mother, and of his brother and himself when they were little boys—it's too bad, it's shameful I have never been in it."

"My dear child, have you ever asked to go over the house? You're a daughter of it by marriage, as much as Mrs. Waldron is. You ought to have swallowed your pride and your aversion to the present possessor, and taken your children to see the race they have sprung from."

"I couldn't do it, Gilbert; I couldn't go as a suppliant for the smallest favor to the house where I ought to be reigning now in right of my boy. Did you hear her just now, when he said he was 'Gerald Waldron, of Larpington?'"

"Yes; and I heard you, too, you injudicious little woman. Your reply sounded like a threat. This village of yours is a lovely one. I don't wonder at your wanting to see your boy reigning in it."

They had by this time climbed to the top of the highest point of land in the parish—a wooded hill, with a cleared space at the summit, that was known as the Wren's Nest. From this place of observation they could see the whole of the village, and almost the whole of the fair manor of Larpington House. Then to the right of them was the deer park, well stocked with dappled deer. Down immediately beneath them was the lake, alive with rare foreign birds and stately swans. On the slopes on the opposite side of the lake were the kitchen gardens, the hot-houses, and vineries; and beyond these again were the lawns, the pleasure-gardens, and the house.

"It was given by Edward the Fourth to a Waldron, and it may go to Miss Vicary, the child of nobody knows whom," Horatia said, presently, with one of those choking, dry sobs that are the result of a collision between hope and despair.

"It may; there's no saying what may happen, Horry. Mrs. Waldron may marry again herself, and have a son, and leave it to him. Don't despair, though, little woman; and, above all, don't cut yourself off from such scanty intercourse as you have already held with her,

and don't startle her into extra reserve and prudence by any more rash speeches. Before any thing can be done—if any thing is ever to be done—we must learn a little of Mrs. Waldron's former life. We will introduce the subject of family likenesses and peculiarities to-night, in the picture-gallery. She isn't a woman, if she doesn't swear that there is some very marked and distinguishing trait in her own family."

"You mean to get me into the picture-gallery, then, Gilbert?" his sister asked, laughing. "I declare I feel already as if we had made a step in the right direction. I shall feel so strong when all the Waldrons are looking down upon me; for I am the mother of the sole remaining Waldron of Larpington."

Meanwhile the young widow and her stranger guest had been the subject of much conversation in the village. It had been satisfactorily ascertained, some half-hour after his arrival, that he was Mrs. Arthur's brother. And "a fine outspoken gentleman—one who wasn't afraid to take out his purse," he was pronounced to be. But Larpington society sighed to know something more about him, and about the way he had made the money which filled that purse. It was only natural and proper that it should do so, for had not one of "our own young gentlemen (as the dead brothers were still called here in the cradle of their race) married his sister?"

Accordingly, this afternoon, as soon as Mrs. Arthur Waldron and Mr. Denham were well away from the Bridge House, her household received visitors. One of the first who presented themselves in the kitchen, and engaged the cook in cheerful converse, was Miss Vicary's maid.

The two young women had been born and brought up in the village, were old school-fellows, and at odd times bosom friends. There were periods when envy, hatred, and malice intervened and separated them. This trio had been reigning in Margaret, the Bridge House servant's mind for some time, in consequence of her old friend Rhoda having got the situation of own maid to the young lady at The House. For Miss Vicary gave high wages, and the perquisites of her special retainer were many.

But this day Margaret, having something to tell, yearned for some one to tell it to; and so the welcome her successful friend met with was a warm one. They spoke for a while of the gay doings of The House, and then, somewhat triumphantly, Margaret trotted out her one ewe lamb.

"We have company, too," she said—"missus's brother, a gentleman of great fortune. Nurse heard missus telling Master Gerald, the other night, that it would be the making of him, if his Uncle Gilbert took a fancy to him."

"Law!" Rhoda ejaculated, and then they went on to discuss the wonderfulness of it all. That Mrs. Arthur should go on living in such a quiet, "mean" kind of way, they called it, when her brother was a man rich enough to be the making of Master Gerald! "He's made it by conjuring, from what I make out," Margaret added; and then they agreed that they could make nothing of it.

But Miss Vicary made something out of it when her maid, in the course of dressing her mistress's hair for dinner that night, mentioned this among other "little bits of news she had heard while out walking." It impressed her, evidently; for the fine, Napolconic face grew even more thoughtful and determined than it was wont to be.

When she was dressed, she went to her mother's room, and opened the subject at once.

"Mother, the first good-natured thing we have done to Mrs. Arthur Waldron is a foolish one. This man, her brother, is a rich lawyer."

"What of that?" Mrs. Waldron answered, moving her hands restlessly about the toilet-table litter.

"I would rather have heard he had been any thing else. They have the habit of prying, whether they fancy there's any thing to pry into or not."

"He's welcome to pry all over the house, and into the will too, if he likes. Not all the lawyers in England can upset it. Why, Nelly, you're not going to faint at shadows?"

The younger woman shook her head. It was a gesture of impatience at the idea propounded, but, like all Miss Vicary's movements, it was slow, and, in a manner, dignified.

"I'm sorry he is a lawyer, because I liked what I saw of him yesterday, and I don't want to like a lawyer," she said.

Her mother laughed with merry, vulgar significance.

"Lawyer or no lawyer, you must make yourself pleasant to him to-night, or else his sister will think we got them here to slight them, and I am sure I had no thought but kindness toward them. Come, my dear, our friends will be down before us. Never mind the lawyer; he may be a married man."

But it gave no pleasure to handsome, placid

Nelly Vicary to think that this stranger—this good-looking, *debonnaire*, clever man, who seemed to have brought a rush of fresh, living air with him into the place from the outside world—it gave her no pleasure to think that he might be married.

Verily he had done well in leaving his wife behind him. The thought that he had done so flashed across his mind as they were driving up to Larpington House that night.

"Just oblige me, and for your own sake say nothing of Bessie," he exclaimed, suddenly.

"No one here knows any thing about us, I suppose?"

"People here don't even know you're married," she answered. "I have made no confidences concerning myself or any one connected with me."

Her brother said, encouragingly,

"There's nothing got by making confidences. One either interests people too little or too much."

Then the fly stopped, and they went into Larpington House.

CHAPTER III.

"ALAS! THEY HAD BEEN FRIENDS IN YOUTH."

THE change from the fusty fly, with its discolored lining and disorganized springs, its draughts, its damp, and its one slow depressed horse, to the light, the warmth, the freshness, the intense vitality of that interior into which they came in a moment, would have been direfully distressing to a woman of Horatia's temperament if she had not remembered that "all this might be Gerald's."

It was the first time that the widow of the youngest son of it had seen Larpington House by artificial light. And being an impressionable woman, with an artistic eye, she was vividly impressed with the deep magnificent effects of light and shade that were given by space and splendor. Armor, in the abstract, was not a thing in which she took the faintest interest. But when she looked round on the suits that were hung up here, and remembered that they had been worn by little Gerald's ancestors, she thrilled with an intensity of emotion that made her glow into absolute beauty.

Undoubtedly they were a distinguished-looking pair that brother and sister, and more than one of the many guests assembled in the great drawing-room thought so, as they came into the room.

Mrs. Waldron had hoisted her banner very high, and had beaten her drum very loudly this Christmas-tide, and the result of her exertions was a great gathering at Larpington House. As far as numbers went, it was a grand success. But the minority "wondered" among themselves how the majority got there. The set

who knew all about each other and themselves, and who fondly imagined that every one outside "the neighborhood" even knew all about them also, found themselves suddenly confronted by another set who were not only in hopeless ignorance about the established "Orders" here, but seemed to be in darkness as to established "Orders" of the like kind anywhere.

They were, too, this latter set, people with odd-sounding names of which *Debrett* was innocent. And a certain dimness and mistiness appeared to hang about the regions of their respective homes. And that these things were, was evident to the clear vision of Mr. Gilbert Denham before he had been in the room with them ten minutes.

"It is the first time that I have had the pleasure of seeing my old friends and my new ones under my roof," Mrs. Waldron explained to him, with smiling assurance; and he could not help feeling, "Whatever she is, the woman isn't all bad. She doesn't cast off old friends."

Suddenly, as he was thinking this, he became conscious that Miss Vicary was moving toward them; and in spite of the slow stateliness of her movement and her outward tranquillity, he fathomed that she was troubled.

"Mr. Denham is not likely to be interested in which is which, mamma," she said, coloring faintly. "For my part, I find the new just as dull as the old." And then she looked at him again, and thought how far superior he was to any one else in the room.

He laughed, and glanced over the array of

fat county ladies who were sitting about in a state of speechless calm, the result partly of their having nothing to say, and partly of their dread fear that they were compromising their position by dining with a miscellany that was so dubiously edited. From them his eyes wandered to their lords, who were finding social safety in discussing their own and their neighbors' property.

"Nothing to be got out of them," was his mental verdict. "They don't like Mrs. Waldron, but they know nothing about her. There is *my* happy hunting-ground." And he unwarily suffered an expression of interest to come into his face as he turned it toward the "people she had collected from Heaven knows where," as her county neighbors expressed it.

Conspicuous among these former friends of Mrs. Waldron's was a scrupulously well-dressed man, whose manner was a pendulum between the almost melodramatically absorbed, and the sycophantically smiling. "Has been projected from behind a counter into drawing-room society with too sudden a jerk," was Gilbert's decision respecting this gentleman; "but I see he'll be glad to talk. My friend! we'll know each other better over the walnuts and the wine. Those two sisters, too, they'll be glad when the onus is off them of being intensely interested in each other's remarks; their time shall come on later."

As his reflections reached this point, Miss Vicary lightly touched his arm with her fan.

"Mamma has deputed you to take charge of me, Mr. Denham. I would be sorry for you if there happened to be any one who would amuse you better."

The color had deepened in her face, and her eyes were sparkling with no very soft light.

"How kind of Mrs. Waldron to fathom my wishes so exactly," he said, in a low voice, as he offered her his arm, and they fell into the serpent-like line that was now undulating toward the dining-room. But pleasantly flattering as he made both words and manner, Miss Vicary palpably remained unpropitiated.

Now Gilbert Denham was a man who not only held that Cæsar's wife should be without suspicion, but he was one who would very strongly have advocated the whacking of Cæsar's wife, provided any one had suspected her. But on this occasion he was to a certain extent untrue to his principles. That is to say, though he unquestionably suspected Miss Vicary of something that would, if discovered, not altogether redound to her credit, he was very far

from desiring to hand her over to condign punishment.

Quite apart from the woman, he liked the woman's looks. There was this practical power about Gilbert Denham: he could separate mind and matter. The former, in this case, was probably not absolutely stainless, but the latter was fair and fresh, and so he strove to propitiate her.

"You appeared to be taking a great interest in the Miss Iblets when I was obliged to interrupt your meditations," she said, in what would have been a huffy tone, if "huff" could ever be expressed by a monotone, and with a catching laugh that would have been a giggle if it had not been delivered so slowly.

"The Miss Iblets! Ah, yes; the two young ladies who are opposite to us now," he answered, looking suddenly at them as he spoke, in a way that was designed to make Miss Vicary believe—and that did make Miss Vicary believe—that he had not given a second thought to them. At the same time he was thinking, "What a queer stratum of society one has got into, where such names obtain!" "Old friends of yours, I suppose?" he went on.

"Hardly of mine. Mamma knew their parents, I believe, before papa died."

"I thought, perhaps, you had all been at school together, and had vowed eternal friendship there."

"No; we were not at school together."

"By-the-way—I'm rather interested in the subject—what's your opinion of the relative value of school education at home and abroad for girls?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, uneasily.

"Which do you think is the best? You can't have left school very long, and I want an opinion from some one who has had recent practical experience."

"I'm not competent to give an opinion," she said, presently.

"A lady to whom I was talking on the subject the other day rather prejudiced me against foreign schools, and my mother used to have an antipathy to English boarding-schools. I am vibrating between the two now; I want some one to say with decision, 'I can recommend So-and-so's school.' Now, can't you recommend a school that you were at? Can't you aid me in my difficulty!"

He was a clever man, and he was a well-bred man; but in this instance there was a want of tact in his earnestness, and a want of breeding in his importunity. In his anxiety he was overreaching himself; and the woman he was

addressing was keen enough to take his weapons, and clever enough to turn them against himself.

"Doesn't it strike you that a recently-emanipated school-girl would be the last person in the world whose opinion was worth having on such a subject?"

She asked it lazily, sipping her soup as easily as if she had been accustomed to it all her life.

"Why?" he answered, turning his head slightly, and looking admiringly at the massive profile—the handsome profile of the powerful face that would not be lightly moved to commit itself by an abrupt expression of the truth.

"Why? How can you ask why? If the school were good, not one girl in a hundred would like it well enough to give it a kind word."

"I think you're the girl in a hundred who would do it," he said, irrepressibly. "Come, tell me. Where was your educational pasture?"

"Can't you understand that a girl may be brought up—educated in a way—without ever going to school? That was my case," she said, deprecatingly; and once more he felt that she had unconsciously balked him.

"But I should like this child in whom I am interested to be educated in your way, Miss Vicary," he said, insinuatingly, "if the same conditions would produce the same results."

He had got just so far in his speech when she stopped him.

"What a hard thing it is to know that all the civil things said to one are false," she said, with a look of "ache" in her face that pained him, though he had a good, well-defined object in making her ache. Then she went on:

"You wouldn't care—you know you wouldn't care—to see any girl you were really interested in like me."

"Miss Vicary?" The safest thing to do, under the circumstances, was to throw a world of reproach into his tone. Accordingly, Gilbert Denham threw it.

By way of reply, Miss Vicary remarked, "How well your sister looks to-night!" And the remark caused Gilbert to look at Horatia.

The young widow of Larpington was at her best to-night. It was all so peaceful, so smooth, so well-oiled; and yet intuition taught her that she was in the fray, and the feeling taught her to sparkle in her own essentially feminine way. She was the fairest woman in the room. The people who were meeting her for the first time were unanimous in thinking how much better

the widow of the younger Waldron would have played the part of Queen Regent at Larpington than did the widow of the elder brother.

But for all her charm, and fascination, and beauty—for all his clear, keen perception of these things—for all his genuine and true brotherly affection for her—Gilbert Denham had a momentary pang of regret as he looked at her, that her interests should be utterly and entirely opposed to those of the woman by his side.

For, in pursuing Horatia's interests, he knew that he should press on straight to his object, overturning, unraveling, investigating. And he was almost sorry, as he felt it was possible that such a course might end in the overthrow and degradation of Miss Vicary.

"It's a game of chess," he thought; "and I shall move those pawns, the Miss Iblets, first, though Miss Vicary is no doubt inwardly resolved that I shall not get near them." Then he dismissed the subject from his manner, though not from his mind, and soothed some vague alarms that were beginning to fill Miss Vicary's breast, by saying,

"Yes; my sister is looking very well. I wonder she hasn't married again; don't you?"

"I have never wondered about it before; but I do, now you speak of it. She's more than pretty, and so young-looking."

"It was a very happy marriage, poor Horry's, so long as it lasted." Gilbert went on, thoughtfully, "Did you ever see my brother-in-law?"

She shook her head in the negative, and again the color mounted and spread slowly over her face.

"Mr. Arthur Waldron died before—my stepfather; consequently, before we came back to England. Didn't you know that?" she answered, in a measured, cautious tone, that made him involuntarily regard her steadily again.

"I may have heard of the circumstance, but I have forgotten it," he said, in reply. "I have been out of the country myself for a long time, ever since my poor sister's wedding-day; and I haven't been well posted up in family details. By-the-way, George Waldron died abroad, you say? Where?"

A sullen look, almost of defiance, succeeded the one of embarrassment on Miss Vicary's handsome face.

"You'll be asking me the date, and the hour, and the circumstances next," she replied, making an effort to speak lightly. "Why choose such a gloomy topic? One that you may well think is a sad one for me. We never even

talk of it among ourselves. Mamma has a sensitive horror of hearing her sad loss mentioned."

"Sad loss, indeed!" he answered, smiling. "Your mamma is too sensible a woman, I am sure, to go on bemoaning the loss of a young fellow who might have been her son. Was George Waldron as handsome a fellow as his brother Arthur?"

"Quite. Handsomer, I should think, judging from their portraits." She spoke eagerly, in her infinite relief at his quitting the subject of where George Waldron died. "Mr. Waldron was such a handsome, dashing, splendid young man, that people used to wait about at the hotels on the chance of seeing him pass."

She spoke with more enthusiasm than she had yet displayed, and Gilbert thought, exultantly, "His name is the 'open sesame' to the door of her reserve. Whatever her mother's sentiments concerning him may have been, I have no doubt about the daughter's."

Aloud he said,

"Your report of him makes me wish to see his portrait. I thought poor Arthur a splendid young fellow. Let us go and compare them, by-and-by. Shall we?"

And Miss Vicary answered "Yes" at once, and so he gained his point about effecting an entrance into the picture-gallery.

The pawns that he meant to move without delay were not at all convenient to his hand, when with the earliest detachment of men who followed the ladies he went into the drawing-room. The Miss Iblets were sitting together again on a sofa, in front of which a long table, covered with photographs and annuals, was placed. For a moment he thought, "My time has come. I'll go and talk Christmas literature to them." But even as he thought it he perceived that Miss Vicary's fine person barred the only passage between heavy furniture that led to their retreat.

With an easy reflection that, "though the time hadn't come yet, it should come soon," he turned away, and surveyed some of his other pieces. His sister was his queen; she must be moved into another square without delay. He crossed the room to where she was sitting silently, disdainfully watching and listening to the exuberant mirth wherewith Mrs. Waldron was seeking to amuse her friends.

"It's not a bad game, Horry; why don't you join it?" he asked.

"My dear Gilbert, I'm too old to play at forfeits with any one but my own children," she answered, a little impatiently.

Then she made room for him by her side, and went on in a low voice, "And in devising what the acts of redemption shall be, how the innate vulgarity of that woman comes out? How different George Waldron must have been to my poor boy, to have chosen such a woman for his wife!"

"Don't sit with your thoughts painted on your face, please, dear; you must fall in with these people's ways and humors for little Gerald's sake."

"I shall not further his interests by playing at forfeits," she laughed; "but any thing else. Oh, look! that man who is so uncomfortable in his dress-clothes is coming to me."

"Talk your best to him; he knows something that I want to find out." Gilbert Denham muttered, as the gentleman, who vibrated between melodramatic reserve and sycophantish smiling, approached the young widow—and then, as soon as he saw that his sister meant to attend to his directions, he went back to Miss Vicary, who had been watching him with a sort of unwilling interest the whole time.

"May I see the portraits now?" he asked. "You are not in their game. Will you mind coming and showing them to me?"

She rose up at once, with a certain pleased promptitude that made him clearly understand that both her task and her companion were congenial to her.

"I shall be very glad. Mamma, Mr. Denham and I are going to take a turn in the picture-gallery," she whispered as she passed her mother; and at the same time Gilbert slightly shook his head at his sister, who was watching him eagerly, in a way that told her he was not ready for her yet.

Miss Vicary led the way out of the dining-room, through an anteroom and the grand old hall, and then up the stairs to the wide, lofty corridor, where all the Waldrons of Larpington were hanging in imposing array.

"Shall we begin at the beginning?" Miss Vicary asked.

He had offered her his arm as they ascended the stairs, and she rather liked the idea of a prolonged *tête-à-tête* stroll with him. Physical beauty appealed powerfully to Miss Vicary's senses, and she had seen none of so fine a type, she thought, since George Waldron died, as that of this man who seemed so well inclined to devote himself to her.

"Let us look at the two brothers in whom we are both interested first," he said, softly. "After that we'll go religiously through the whole race."

"Here they are as little boys," she said, crossing the gallery, and pausing before two life-size portraits of a brace of sunny-haired boys. "And the golden-haired woman who stands next to them was their mother."

"She must have been a rare beauty!" Gilbert exclaimed, abruptly.

"Yes," Miss Vicary answered, glowing into animation again at once; "and she gave her rare beauty to her eldest son."

"They are both pretty little fellows," Gilbert said, turning to the boys. "The little chap with his arms round the dog's neck is exactly like my sister's boy. They're fine little men."

"You can see," Miss Vicary went on expatiating, "that even in their childhood George was the handsomest of the two. You see they both have light hair, but George's is real, rich gold. Arthur's turned brown, I know. And George's eyes are those long, lovely violet ones that are so much more beautiful than any other color; Arthur's are just merely moderately good gray ones. Now come and look at them as men."

She stepped on almost rapidly for her, and he followed her, until they came to a full-length of the late master of Larpington.

"This is Mr. Waldron," she said, in a low voice; and Gilbert Denham, looking up, was taken by surprise, even though she had said so much about it, by the forcible representation before him of the very highest type of manly beauty and cultivation.

He was depicted as a man of good height, and slight, strongly-built, clean-limbed frame—a lithe, active-looking man, with a bold, bright, beautiful face that looked out warmly and cordially upon one from the canvas. The golden, floating curls of his boyhood were gone, but the short wavy, crisp locks were of shadowless gold still; and every line of the fair, handsome face expressed culture and refinement.

"And that fellow, who might have been the model for the Apollo Belvidere, married that old woman—and didn't do it for money!" Gilbert Denham thought, with strong disgust. "Why on earth didn't he take the daughter if the onus was on him of marrying one of them? Poor fellow! he must have been in some awful scrape to have taken such desperate measures to get out of it."

As these thoughts passed through his mind, Miss Vicary stood silent, absorbed, gazing up at the magnificent reproduction of a magnificent original, as a devotee might gaze at a shrine containing the holiest relic. Turning

his head toward her abruptly, Gilbert Denham caught the expression of her face, and deepened it for an instant by saying,

"A splendid young fellow, truly! A thousand pities that he died so young, and that he missed the best in life! He ought, according to the fitness of things, to have married some lovely young girl, ought he not?"

He said it out absolutely without design. If Miss Vicary were the sensible girl he half believed her to be, she would thoroughly appreciate the truth of the fact he had stated. Her mother might be a very good woman, and a very decent woman; but she was not the right wife for that glorious-looking young fellow, and Miss Vicary must know it.

"Now we will have a look at Arthur," he went on rapidly, without apparently noticing the hardly suppressed storm of emotion that was raging in the girl's breast, rendering her speechless. "There he is, dear old boy, with his jolly, free, kind smile; but you're right; he was not the Adonis that his brother was. Shall we go back and bring—"

"I would rather not go back for a few minutes," she panted out, sitting on one of the sofas that were ranged along the gallery. "I don't know what it is; but looking at the portraits of people I have known, after they're dead, often makes me ill, they look so pleading."

"And reproachful often, don't they?" he added. "I shouldn't care to face that picture if I had wronged the original in any way, I must say. Will you allow me to go and fetch my sister? I dare say she would like to see how the Waldrons have been in the habit of looking for generations. May I leave you here?"

"Yes, do," she answered, quickly, relieved by the idea of getting rid of her observant companion for a few minutes. "Bring your sister. How impolite of me not to have thought of her before! Go and bring her."

As this was precisely what he had intended to do, Gilbert executed her behest with alacrity. "Come, Horry," he said aloud, entering the drawing-room, "Miss Vicary has sent for you to come and see the family portraits. Will you come, too?" he added, addressing the Miss Iblets; and they rose up gladly, and came out from their solitary fastness, and followed, with Mrs. Arthur Waldron, along the way it pleased this dominating spirit to lead them.

Miss Vicary was her massively-composed self again by the time they reached the picture-gallery. All traces of the unwonted emotion

she had displayed were banished from her face and manner," and there was about her an air of sullen stagnation that was not prepossessing. She rose from the sofa as they approached her, and addressed the Iblets rather crossly.

"Haven't you seen enough of the family fogies? I should have thought you would have found forfeits more amusing."

"Oh, but Mr. Denham asked us to come," they answered.

It was so strange to them to be asked to do any thing by a man of Gilbert's order, that it made them almost disregard Miss Vicary's disapprobation of their conduct. And then, in the easiest, most *debonnaire* way in the world, Gilbert said,

"Will you point out the pictures that will most interest her to my sister, Miss Vicary? I will introduce your friends to the Waldron family from the commencement. It will be quite a study of costume, and we shall have to rake up our history a little, in order to remember 'who reigned' when those were in the flesh."

And then, with jealous, anxious eyes, Miss Vicary watched him walk to the other end of the gallery with the "friends of her youth," from whom she had steadfastly resolved to keep him apart.

"What will he find out, I wonder?" she thought. And something seemed to whisper to her that he would find out whatever he desired.

CHAPTER IV.

"WE ALL HAVE OUR SKELETON CLOSET, I SUPPOSE."

A STRANGE sensation possessed Mrs. Arthur Waldron when at last she found herself in the heart of the house, in the midst of those Waldrons of whom her son—her own boy—was the sole remaining male representative. She had often conjured up in imagination the scene which she now saw set before her, and the emotions that would beset her when she found herself looking for the first time at the portraits of her husband, and of those who had been nearest and dearest to him. But not one of these emotions beset her, now that the circumstances she had imagined had actually come to pass. The one prevailing thrilling sensation was that she was nearing a discovery. That there with the race looking down upon them, some clue would be given to her which would either smash the present possessors of Larpington or substantiate their claim to it.

Fraught with this feeling, she stood quite still and silent before the portraits of the two brothers—still, save that she trembled a little, and the trembling touched a chord of womanly feeling in Miss Vicary's breast.

"It is trying to look at such life-like portraits when the owners are dead," she said, feelingly. "I don't wonder at this upsetting you, if it's as like your husband as the other is like Mr. Waldron."

Horatia recovered herself, shook off the bonds of excited silence, and spoke,

"It's a vivid recollection-awakening likeness of my dear Arthur, and I like it the better for that; and this is George? Indeed, he must have been what Arthur always called him, a magnificent fellow."

"And he died!" Miss Vicary replied, in bitter commentary. "And he died! it's only those whose death would be a boon to themselves and others who live on through every thing."

"You're young to take that morbid view," Horatia said, gently. But though she spoke gently, her feelings partook more of the nature of repulsion than of pity for the girl. "How can she have the bad taste to speak so warmly of my brother-in-law, when she must know that I think he disgraced himself by marrying her mother," she thought, indignantly. And so, though her gentleness of manner and utterance remained unchanged, both were cool—cooler than they had ever been before to Miss Vicary—as she said,

"Shall we follow the others? My brother seems to be amusing them well."

For the last two or three minutes, Miss Vicary, absorbed in her contemplation of the gallant, graceful beauty of the late master of Larpington, had forgotten to keep a watch on the proceedings of the trio whose temporary union was so antagonistic to her desires. But now she hurried after them, and as she came up she heard one of the sisters say,

"We oughtn't to make so much noise down at this end; we may disturb the invalid;" and as she said it she pointed to a wide door that was close to her side.

"I didn't know that there was an invalid in the house," Gilbert Denham said, with ready courtesy, dropping his voice as he spoke. And then Miss Vicary hurriedly, and in some confusion, put in,

"Yes, her case is a sad one. I ought to have cautioned you not to talk loud; her nerves are affected by the least noise."

Through the gallery, as they were gathered together talking in this way, came Mrs. Waldron and several of her guests, and in a moment she understood the subject of their conversation.

"A sad case indeed, as Melly says," she exclaimed, pathetically. Then she lowered her voice, and asked Gilbert,

"Have they told you whom she is?"

He shook his head in the negative.

"My eldest daughter, and she is mentally ill; we all have our skeleton closet, I suppose, Mrs. Arthur," she continued, turning to the young widow, who was listening with both eyes and heart full of pity now. "Our affliction is a heavy one, indeed; we ought not to have saddened our friends by referring to it to-night, Melly, dear."

Then they all turned with rather lowered spirits, and went back to the drawing-room. And as they went back, the man, who has been mentioned as spasmodically melodramatic in style, took an opportunity of whispering to Gilbert.

"Miss Melly is a fine girl—as fine a girl as a man can desire to see; but the eldest girl was as pretty a creature when they took her abroad for her health as I ever saw in my life; it's a sad case indeed."

"Is she much altered?" Gilbert asked, sympathetically.

"Terribly; merely a faint trace of good looks left now; naturally, they don't like the poor child to be seen by those who knew her in her bloom. With all her good fortune, Mrs. Waldron has her heavy cross to bear."

"She has indeed," Gilbert responded, heartily. And somehow or other he felt sorry that he had vowed to find out all he could about the Larpington House people, since what he had found out was so very sad.

"Your brother-in-law must have had a bee in his bonnet," Gilbert remarked to his sister as they drove home that night; "nothing but lunacy can account for a young fellow, such as

both his likeness and report represent him to have been, throwing himself away as he did. It is distracting to think of him as the husband of that woman, and infatuated by that woman."

"Gilbert, I'm bewildered! Two or three times while we stood together in the picture-gallery there was absolute passion in the girl's face, as she looked at or spoke of George Waldron; before I saw this, I liked her better than I did her mother, believing her to be harmless; now I detest her even more than I do Mrs. Waldron. 'Mrs. Waldron!' isn't it odious that she should bear that name?"

They were at home by this time, and he was handing her out of the fly and into the Bridge House as he answered.

"We don't seem very likely to find a flaw in her right to all the name endows her with, Horry. You were right in saying there was a mystery in the lives of those people, but you see we have proved that the mystery concerns themselves entirely—is one they were justified in shielding from the vulgar gaze—and in no-wise interferes with yours or Gerald's interests."

"But they may have *another*, Gilbert," she pleaded earnestly; "who knows but the discovered mystery may aid us in elucidating the undiscovered one? Let us try to get sight of and speech with the mentally-afflicted Miss Vicary; she may be more useful to us than the sister who is in possession of her senses."

"What a small Machiavelli you're becoming," he said, laughing.

"Because I feel as sure as that I'm a living woman that my boy is being wronged; I'd stoop very low indeed to conquer those who are defrauding him of his own; and through the labyrinth of scheming you must be my guide. What shall I do next?"

"Ask them to an evening party; show yourself willing to be on social terms with them; go there as often as you can, and be quite sure that I am not wronging Bessie if I seem to be forgetting the fact that I am a married man."

The morning of the 26th dawned fair and mild as a morning in May. All trace of yesterday's frost had vanished, and the scarlet holly-berries with their emerald-green leaves looked almost incongruous in the sunshine. The brother and sister at the Bridge House breakfasted with their windows open, and a sudden increase of sunshine made Gilbert exclaim,

"It would be a shame to spend this morning in the house; do you ever ride in these days, Horry?"

"I have no horse."

"Have you a habit?"

"Yes; but I'm out of practice; and, moreover, I don't believe there are any horses to be got in the place."

"I'll see about that; I am now going to walk up to Larpington House to suggest that the younger members of the party join in our ride; *does* she ever ride, by-the-way?"

"Oh! yes; in a massive pompous kind of way, with a man out of livery behind her."

"We will dispense to-day with the pomp, and the man in plain clothes, the massiveness must be put up with; leave Miss Vicary to me, and after a few days I will undertake to know more than she has the least intention of telling me at present of the Vicary family history."

He did it so easily and unconstrainedly that it seemed to them a natural thing that the handsome, amusing young man whom they had only known one short day, should saunter up and call on Mrs. Waldron and Miss Vicary at an early and unconventional hour. He excused his want of ceremonious observance by explaining that it was altogether in the plain path of duty to do whatever offered to be done in a place where there was so little going on.

"I have induced my sister to go for a ride with me, and I have come up to try and persuade you to join us, Miss Vicary—you and such of your friends as have nothing better to do."

"Where have you got horses from?" Miss Vicary asked, bluntly. But inwardly she was pleased at the prospect of such an escort as Gilbert Denham. Her circle of new acquaintances was a very small one; and the majority

of those whom she knew in the neighborhood were heads of houses, husbands and fathers, who had left the days of their youth, and all taste for gay fooling far behind them. This young man's society was a pleasant change to her, "however it ended," as she observed to herself.

"When I have received your promise to join us, I shall go in search of horses for my sister and myself; but I want your promise first to give a zest to the search," he answered her, in a lowered tone, and with that sort of beseeching air that the best of men will assume at times to any thing but the best of women.

"The Larpington House stables are too well stocked to make any search necessary," Mrs. Waldron put in graciously. "My dear Melly, go, and don't make any more ado about it. Mr. Denham, will you be kind enough to go round to the stables and choose horses for your sister and yourself."

And so it was settled, not exactly against Melly's will, but hardly with her hearty and entire concurrence. Nor can it be declared that Gilbert carried his set purpose through by the force of his unassisted moral sway and power of acting as he pleased. It was Circumstance that befriended him in this matter. It was the easy habit of doing the easy thing that comes to our hand to be done that led Mrs. Waldron to further his intimacy with her daughter, and that led her daughter to fall into the scheme, though she doubted the wisdom of it—doubted vaguely, be it understood. If Miss Vicary could have defined her fears, she would have taken care that they should never be realized.





CHAPTER V.

A NEW ALLY.

MELLY had no sooner suffered herself to be whirled into the vortex of her mother's gracious permission that every one who willed it should ride away forthwith, than she remembered the Iblets, and resolved that they at least should not benefit by equestrian exercise this morning. "They're perfect sieves," she said to Mrs. Waldron, when that lady said, in an excess of indulgent feeling,

"Why shouldn't the poor things go if they can sit upon a horse? They haven't had the luck to have the many pleasures you have, Melly."

"They're perfect sieves, mother; Mr. Denham is clever enough to lead them to say any thing he likes."

"Well, my dear, they know nothing that could go against us in any way; when they knew us we were 'poor but honest,'" and Mrs. Waldron laughed gayly as she made her quotation from the literature for the moral improvement of the people.

"All the same, if they go I won't," Melly said, sullenly; "it sha'n't go on before my eyes, it's bad enough to have gone through it once; to hear them last night talking to him in their gushing awkward way, not a bit as ladies talk, was horrible. What could he have thought of us when it was forced upon him what our former connection was? With all your worldly wisdom, mother, you're a child in some things still."

It boots not to delay in the telling. The end of it was that the Miss Iblets remained at home, when Miss Vicary and a gentleman in attendance on her rode down to the Bridge House to join Mrs. Arthur Waldron and Mr. Denham.

This cavalier is a new figure—an altogether fresh and altogether important figure on the

canvas, whereon these people and their fortunes are portrayed.

He was making his first call on the lady of Larpington House, when Melly came into the room to say that she was about to start for the ride, and he had already made his explanation as to why he had not called before.

It was brief and entirely satisfactory. The owner of the finest property next to Larpington in the neighborhood, he (Mr. Stapylton) had been absent from it for the last seven or eight years. He had gone away a gay, dashing, gallant-looking young fellow of two or three-and-twenty. And now he had come back a good typical well-bred Englishman of thirty, after having seen a good deal of the Old World and the New.

To say that Frank Stapylton resembled George Waldron in personal appearance would be untrue. Nevertheless, there was about him a certain look, a certain trick of bearing and expression, a certain thorough-bred ease and swing of manner that reminded both these women who saw him for the first time of the dead master of Larpington.

Analyze him, and not a single point of resemblance in feature or coloring to the dead man who had been such an Adonis, could have been discovered. Frank Stapylton's hair and eyes might have been any color so far as the majority were concerned. While the man or woman must have been obtuse indeed, and afflicted with the most virulent form of color-blindness, who could fail to perceive that George Waldron's hair was of the brightest gold, and his eyes of that real violet velvet hue, for whose love-looks many a woman has thought the world well lost. Yet, for all these marked differences, they did resemble one another in a variety of ways, in outline, in manner, in beau-

ty, in expression, in a certain habit of being two of the chief men in that county-side.

It fell upon Mrs. Arthur Waldron's ears with a sound as if she had heard it before, that statement he made as to his having been the most intimate friend of George and Arthur Waldron, when they were all lads together. "George was my senior by three or four years," he explained, "but Arthur and I were just the same age; how much I should like to see his widow."

And then it was made clear to him that Mrs. Arthur Waldron, the widow of the younger brother, was living in Larpington village. And by sheer force of circumstances, without any wish on their part that it should be so, it was arranged that Mr. Stapylton should ride down to the Bridge House with Miss Vicary, and be introduced to the young widow.

It was like a sudden relapse into the old life to Horatia to see this man, with his vague, indefinite likeness to her dead husband and his brother bowing before her. His manner, his words of hearty refined pleasure at having realized his desire of being introduced to her, stirred her heart and gratified her taste. Miss Vicary was not the medium through whom she would have desired to gain knowledge of any new people. But on this occasion Horatia freely forgave Miss Vicary—the knowledge gained was so very pleasant.

He joined the riding party, and it came about so naturally that he fell behind with her. They had so many interests in common; he could tell her so many incidents of their boyhood and very young manhood—"For we were more like brothers than new friends," he observed. And when he had said that he looked into her face for a moment, and felt he could trust her, and added,

"It nearly knocked me down this morning when I saw the woman George married. You must understand what I felt; you must be disgusted."

"Not only disgusted, but nearly distraught about it," she replied, with eager confidence, "puzzled, worried, driven wild with the craving I have to find out the why and wherefore of it all. Was George Waldron mad when he wrote of that woman as the 'good angel of his life?'"

And then she went on to tell of the extraordinary will and all its injustice, of her suspicions, of her dislike to and her general animosity against these current rulers at Larpington House—went on to tell all these things freely and frankly, as if she had known him for years; and at last, in the most natural manner in the

world, found herself asking him to conjecture as to the causes which could have brought about George Waldron's marriage.

"It is altogether unaccountable," he said, earnestly. "When I saw Mrs. Waldron to-day, my first feeling was that she was masquerading in jest; my next, that George Waldron's mind must have been affected when he described his bride to me in a rhapsody of love and admiration."

"After his marriage. You saw him after his marriage?" she interrupted.

"Yes; we met in Paris accidentally. He had left Mrs. Waldron at Marseilles. He was planning a tour in the East then, and wanted me to join them. His wife was full of poetical fervor for the Morning Land, he told me."

"How could he bring himself to utter such false folly about a woman like that?" Horatia asked, indignantly. "Full of poetical fervor for the Morning Land! I doubt if she ever heard of it." And then she went on to almost upbraid him for not having gone back to Marseilles with George Waldron, and pointed out to the latter the manifold imperfections of his wife.

"I don't think I could have carried my friendship to him to the extent of indorsing his statement as his wife being 'one of the fair-faced angel women for whom men would gladly lay down their lives,'" he laughed out merrily.

"Did he say that? Do you wonder at my being irritated when I hear of such senility, remembering, as I do always, that my boy suffers from it? George Waldron was my husband's brother, and my husband loved him dearly, but he must have been very mad or very bad to speak of that swarthy, repulsive-looking woman as a fair-faced angel."

"The daughter is a fine girl," he said, looking up steadfastly at the pair who were ahead of them. "Is a complication to arise, Mrs. Waldron?—Is your brother being lured by love into the enemy's camp?"

A scarlet flush spread over Horatia's face. It shocked the delicate purity of the young matron's mind that her brother—a married man—should be conducting himself in a way that did legitimately give rise to such a suspicion. At the same time she could not repudiate the idea utterly and scornfully as she desired to do, for had not Gilbert cautioned her, for Gerald's sake, "to keep the fact of there being a Mrs. Gilbert Denham in existence a secret."

Still she could not suffer such an idea to obtain concerning her brother. So she looked at her new friend with wistful, pleading eyes, and feeling she could trust the man who had spent

his boyhood with Arthur, she said, "All is fair in love and war, you know; and there must always be war between these usurpers and me."

CHAPTER VI.

WAS IT A VICTORY?

MEANWHILE there was not such a thorough cordiality, not such an utter want of constraint between the pair who were riding on in front. In some way or other Miss Vicary had picked up some of the rudiments of the art of riding, of which she had been entirely ignorant before her first appearance on the Larpington scene. But she was far from being either an easy or a graceful rider. She looked firm in her saddle, but not fascinating. As he regarded her this day riding steadily along by his side, Gilbert Denham was not swayed by the same sort of feelings that upset Lancelot on the occasion of his first fatal ride with the fair Queen Guinevere.

It would have been a very easy task for the woman-pleaser to win Miss Vicary into a state of complete forgetfulness of his belonging to the adverse faction, if he had been so minded.

But her appearance on horseback was not attractive enough to urge him on to the task. He admired her more, and showed that he admired her, when she moved about a room or stalked along a road like a feminine tower of strength. And Miss Vicary was quick to feel the slight chill which had fallen across the warmer current of his manner of the last night—quick to feel and prompt to reciprocate.

A sullen gloom settled upon and clouded over her for about half a mile. She grew more and more taciturn, and at last, with an ill-bred woman's want of power of concealment, she displayed her annoyance openly.

"We seem to me to be having a very dull ride," she pouted; "it's always the way if people start off at an unusual time, meaning to be unusually happy; we shall be home again about the time we ought to have been coming out if we had been sensible."

"But I hope you're not contemplating any thing so cruel as curtailing the ride," he said suavely, with sudden remembrance of all the

evil that might be done by any thing like an expression of indifference to her; "I am looking forward to making it a model of a winter's-day idyl. A day's ride through such dales and over the crests of such hills as these is a romance indeed."

"Didn't somebody write a book with some such title?" she asked, quickly—"some one who was consul somewhere abroad where we were?"

"Yes, Lever. His title was 'A Day's Ride, a Life's Romance,' and it was a misnomer; but many a life's romance is commenced in the course of a day's ride."

A commonplace bit of sentiment—worthless, though true enough—a mere platitude, meaningless and idle and vague; but still fraught with feeling and meaning, with delicious possibilities and eloquence to the woman who listened to it. Gilbert Denham's brow burned with shame as he realized how firmly she believed in the folly he only implied, and in order that he might not be conscience-smitten to retrace his path he hurried along it the faster—with more apparent ardor.

"The romance commenced for me last night," he began in a low tone. "A few hours before I should not have conceived it possible to feel the affliction of strangers so keenly as I felt for you last night in the picture-gallery."

The color spread in a flame over her face, even her throat reddened in a way that told him she must be suffering some smarting pain in her heart for the blood to be forced up with such violence into her usually pale face. After the lapse of a moment or two she answered him, with trembling lips,

"Her mental affliction was brought on by illness—by unhappiness, Mr. Denham," she explained; "it is not hereditary in our family; it's quite an isolated case."

She spoke so earnestly and impressively that

her meaning—the full meaning of the assurance she desired to convey to his mind, was patent to him.

"There must be a great satisfaction to your mother in that," he said, gently; "but to you the agony of seeing your young sister blighted by unhappiness, must have been very terrible. Can you justify my interest in what concerns you sufficiently to tell me her story?"

She shifted the reins uneasily from one hand to the other. She re-adjusted her habit. She fidgeted with her horse's mane. But she *could not* defy nor disregard the influence this man was establishing over her, though she had a presentiment that harm would come of it.

"The man she was in love with died suddenly, and it turned her brain," she said, speaking slowly and unwillingly, "that is all there is to tell; it's not a very uncommon story, I believe, but we don't care to talk about it."

"And you feel naturally that she is happier and better altogether at home with those who love her than she would be at an asylum? I understand how that may be well with loving tender women; still, speaking as a man who professionally has had to dabble in two or three cases of lunacy, I should prefer the chances of recovery that a residence in a well-attended asylum would give her."

"Don't dabble in this case, don't, Mr. Denham," she exclaimed, eagerly; "her case has been pronounced hopeless, and it would be stirring up sorrow to make any change now; why should you care about her at all?" she asked, relapsing into her womanly sullenness, "You've never seen her. You never will see her, in all human probability."

As soon as she said these words, a resolve that he would see the skeleton of Larpington House framed itself in his mind. At any cost he would see her, though a hundred mothers and massive sisters barred the doors of her prison. Ay, and this girl by his side should be his aid in the enterprise.

"Never see your sister!" he muttered. "You have indeed failed to recognize the full meaning of my interest if you can say that."

Again she was visibly affected, visibly swayed by his manner, visibly shaken in her stronghold by his partiality.

"If you came to see her solely on account of her being my sister, I hardly know—how can I know what to say? I have no sentiment about it," she wound up with abruptly setting her lips firmly, and retaining her veil of calousness which was her ordinary garb.

And then Gilbert Denham made a still bold-

er stroke and avowed that he "would wake it in her;" and the result of that bright winter day's ride was that Miss Vicary went home pledged to bring him into the presence of her unfortunate "sister Clarice."

* * * * *

For two or three days, during which intercourse was very frequent between the two houses, the subject of Clarice was not mooted. Miss Vicary hoped that it was forgotten, and abstained from saying a word to her mother about it, in weak reliance on that hope. And meantime she expanded into absolute warmth of feeling about Gilbert Denham, and generally gathered such Christmas roses as he caused to bloom about her path.

"She's actually getting fond of you; oh Gilbert!" his sister began, in a pleading, expostulating tone, one morning. Her conscience was terribly tender this special day, for all through the long hours of the night she had been haunted by a fell spectral shadow of self-reproach about some new interests she was beginning to experience, and some new pleasure she was permitting herself not to taste but to think about tasting. Therefore it was with tears in her voice that she said, "She's actually getting fond of you; oh Gilbert!"

"And for your sake and your boy's it's necessary that she should get still fonder of me," he answered, coolly. And then he told her a portion of the conversation he had held with Miss Vicary while they were out riding.

Like the majority of highly organized and intensely sensitive people, Horatia Waldron shrank from any communication with those unhappy ones who are bereft of reason. So it was with a shudder of mingled pity and repugnance that she exclaimed—

"Why put yourself in the way of the mad Miss Vicary? isn't the sane one difficult enough and disagreeable enough too for that matter?"

"The mad one will suit my purpose better; I have a strong feeling that I shall come out of my interview with her with the end of the clue in my hand; and," he continued, rising up, "I mean to have the interview this very day."

"Supposing she should be dangerous, Gilbert," she suggested, anxiously. "The Vicarys are rather on an alarming scale; supposing she should fly at and hurt you?"

"I shall have a powerful protector in the person of her sister, the fair Melly," he laughed out merrily. "Come, look up, little woman; your prospects improve; I believe your days

in the obscurity of the Bridge House are numbered."

"How sanguine he is, and how bright and good," she thought, as he walked away alone at last. "Does the end justify the means, I wonder; I must say the means are very unpleasant—unpleasant to me and unworthy of Gilbert; but—"

But! she remembered little Gerald, and she could not help herself. Two mighty motives for being perfectly quiescent.

Gilbert Denham meanwhile would not, dared not, glance at, much less deliberately consider, the aspect and bearing of a single step that intervened between himself and his goal. He resolved upon reaching it. That was all. The "something" that there was to discover he determined upon discovering. What that something might be he had not the faintest suspicion—the faintest shadow of a suspicion. If he had been burdened, or blessed, with one he, too, might have fainted in spirit, and have faltered on his path to that inevitable end which a great writer has made a familiar friend to us in fiction.

But fate and circumstances favored his design to-day. Whether these mighty allies did so to his ultimate entire satisfaction or not, must remain an open question.

As he went up the avenue to Larpington House, an avenue which somewhat resembled a cathedral aisle with its regular massive pillar-like elms, whose branches met in a grand lofty arch at a great height above, he met the daughter of the house, unaccompanied save by a plethoric pug.

It has been said that she looked well in out-of-door costume, when marching majestically over a good space of ground. And to-day she felt that she looked even better than usual, and the feeling put her at her best, as it does every woman.

Her hat became her, coming well down over her forehead, and just leaving the straight dark line of her well-defined brows visible beneath its velvet edge. There was a soft curly plume, a nice compact fluffy thing, flopping over the brim, which was borne out and well supported by the bright scarlet satin petticoat which she wore under a black velvet polonaise.

And again there was a something good and easy and suggestive of the fine well-drawn figure beneath it, in the cut of this polonaise. In a loose jacket, that did not indicate her lines, Miss Vicary would have resembled a milch-cow rather than a modern Cleopatra. Her appearance to-day made his task easy and

pleasant, and so he did not halt in his purpose of entering upon it.

That Miss Vicary was one of those dangerous creatures who was torpid and phlegmatic apparently until their weak point is touched, and who then wake up into a fullness and warmth of life, and a vigor of will, that is apt to sweep away all before it like a devastating flood, was becoming evident to him. That he had touched that weak point—a subdued but passionate longing for love—was also evident. And that she would not only be revengeful, but would be revenged when she discovered that she had been befooled, was a certainty. Nevertheless he went on unflinching, although he liked the woman he was going to hurt.

It is not a pleasant task this, of endeavoring to analyze the feelings of a man who was engaged on a piece of deliberate deception. Still it must be done; otherwise, in view of his conduct, all respect for his character would be lost. The former must appear to be bold, unscrupulous, pitiless. For Gilbert Denham regarded himself at this juncture simply as an unpaid detective, and deemed that in the endeavor to unravel crime he was justified, both by honor and by law, in false pretenses that would otherwise have been loathsome to him.

She too had determined to bring things to an issue this day, but to a very different issue to that which he had in his mind. As has been said, Gilbert Denham was the first gentleman who had "ever made love to her." The first gentleman, be it observed! There was a mental reservation on her part when she made this statement to herself.

This being the case, and he having stirred such depths as there were in a heart that had never been thoroughly awakened, she, with a certain coarse impatience that would not brook delay, resolved upon conducting herself toward him so as to leave him in no doubt as to the success of his suit. It was a portion of her creed—it is unfortunately a portion of the creed of many a woman who is better defended by breeding and education from falling a prey to such an error than was Miss Vicary—it was a portion of her creed that a woman may very well go more than half-way to meet a man who has moved one step toward her. The professors of this popular and rather debasing superstition rarely find that their reliance upon it is realized. Nevertheless it flourishes, this ungentle faith, and its followers adhere to and uphold it with a fervor that tells not of repeated failure.

On this occasion, as soon as she met Gilbert

Denham, Miss Vicary did not tell him that she had come out with her war-paint on expressly to meet him. But she showed him that she had done so in a way that would have made words weak as a means of flattery in comparison.

Her blush was beyond her control, perhaps, but her passionately penetrating glance, the tender way in which she inclined her head toward him, and the desperate tenacity with which she clung to the clasp of his hand as she stood speechless before him, all these were weapons that it would have been more womanly to have sheathed.

But she did not sheathe them. She waved them and caused them to flash, and strove with all her might (and she had power) to dazzle him by a display of them. And she succeeded in dazzling him apparently, for his eyes and voice and manner grew softer. It is given to few men to be virtuously discourteous when a woman reverses the order of things, and makes those advances which men ordinarily prefer reserving to themselves, as their own special privilege.

The long lingering pressure of her hand had not the power to thrill him much—handsomer women had pressed his hand before this day dawned on him—but though it did not thrill him he returned it. A Sir Galahad would not have done this, but Gilbert Denham was not a Sir Galahad. He was a nineteenth-century man of the world, bent on making a woman whom he admired and distrusted serve a purpose to the fulfillment of which he had pledged his legal skill and intellectual ability. From the moment he returned that hand-clasp she was in his toils. She might glide, slide, evade, spring with the subtlety and power of a panther. But he was infolding her with the subtler force and strength of the boa-constrictor. But he admired the creature out of whom he meant to crush a secret, and so he would not hurt her more than was necessary.

"Did you come to meet me, did you?" he asked. And the way in which he asked it would have led a cleverer woman than Emmeline Vicary to believe that he hoped she had from the bottom of his heart.

"I was going for a walk, and I'm glad I didn't miss you," she replied, with a certain bold shyness that characterizes the concessions of some women.

"Don't go on to the road," he pleaded, "the roads are hard and prosaic, and rather chilly, to tell the truth, to-day: let us go into the shelter of the woods; or are you not shod for the undergrowth?"

She held out a large, well-shaped, well-booted foot by way of answer, and taking the gesture for one of assent to his proposition, he led her from the avenue down a turfed path, and they were soon in seclusion under green trees.

This was all very well, and very promising as far as it went. But Gilbert Denham had no intention of spending the shining hours in pacing up and down a grassy alley, and raising hopes that were eventually to be defeated in Miss Vicary's breast. While she was wondering how long this state of ecstatic expectation would last, and in what way it would be brought to a termination by a definite offer of marriage, he was casting about for the surest means of getting himself conveyed without delay into the presence of her mentally afflicted sister, Clarice.

"I should make this wood my reading-room in the summer, if I lived here," he said, as they came to a clearer space in which the trees assumed a larger and more forest-like appearance.

"I think I prefer reading in the house in an arm-chair when I read at all," she replied. It was not at all in harmony with her feelings that the conversation should take a literary turn.

"Yes, the house and an arm-chair for the perfect appreciation of some books I allow. Anthony Trollope's novels, for instance, ought to be read under every condition of comfort that modern civilization enables us to surround ourselves with; but this is the spot I'd select to read Keats in or Tennyson; he must have been here when he wrote 'The Talking Oak.'"

"I don't know any thing about Keats," she answered, with a sulky conviction growing upon her that he was going out of her depth, where she would be unable to follow him, on purpose to get rid of her. "I don't know any thing about Keats; and as for Tennyson's 'May Queen,' I hate it. I hate every thing that begins in joy and ends in sorrow all in a minute."

"But you don't hate the Idyls, you can't hate the Idyls," he went on hurriedly, seeing that she knew nothing about them. "It must have been in this very wood that Vivien fooled Merlin, as women have gone on fooling men from that day to this; do you remember that verse where he says,

"My name, once mine, now thine, is doubly mine,
For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were
thine,
And shame, could shame be thine, that shame were
mine,
So trust me not at all, or all in all."

"I didn't remember *that*," Emmy answered, emphasizing the last word in a way that was

designed to make him believe that she did remember the rest of the poem.

"Poor old fellow, and she was humbugging him the whole time," Gilbert laughed. "I find myself entering heartily into Merlin's feelings, and sympathizing with him more than I ever did before, now that I find myself in what I believe to be the very wood to which she followed him."

"How fanciful you are, Mr. Denham," she said, discontentedly. "Why can't you be satisfied to take to-day in the wood as you find it, and leave fabulous Merlins and Vivians alone?"

"You are right: 'to-day in the wood' is fair enough for any man," he said, in a lower voice. Then he let silence reign for a few moments, in order that the "lowered tone" might have ample time to take its due effect before he resumed.

"'To-day' in the wood is sufficiently fair to make me hope that there may be a to-morrow in the wood for me."

"Why doesn't he ask me to-day," Emmy thought impatiently, as he paused again. Then he went on, "It is fair enough to beguile me into the folly of reminding a lady of her promises; you promised to let me know your poor

sister Clarice. I shall not feel that you 'trust me all in all' until I do."

It was a disappointing climax. The girl really thought a minute before that he was on the brink of asking her to be his wife. However, considering her lack of both blood and culture, she bore her disappointment bravely enough.

"I don't know what mamma will say," she managed to utter; "but as far as I am concerned, you may see her this morning."

They had turned, and were nearly out in the open avenue again, as she said this, and he came to a full stop before her, taking her hand very gently, almost caressingly.

"I have one more favor to ask. My sister lives very quietly, as you know, gives no parties, scarcely sees any society at all; now, in her name, I am to ask you to dine and spend this evening at the Bridge House; will you?"

Would she? What would she not have done for this man, who was so rapidly the empire of her soul.

"Yes, I will," she said, with a pant. "It is kind of Mrs. Arthur to wish to see me so intimately."

Then they walked back to Larpington House, and she led him straight through the picture-gallery to the door of Clarice's room.





CHAPTER VII.

CLARICE.

GILBERT DENHAM almost pitied the ordinarily resolute girl for the wealth of irresolution and anxiety she displayed when at last she had brought him to the brink of his bourne.

"I think, after all, I had better go and call mamma?" she said, interrogatively. "Mamma quells her when no one else can; and the sight of a stranger may make her—"

"What? violent?" Gilbert suggested, as Emmy hesitated.

"No, not violent, but talkative," she explained; "and as she never talks before mamma, I think I had better fetch her at once."

"But I assure you, even if she is garrulous, I will show no aggravating signs of being startled or surprised," Gilbert pleaded, watching Miss Vicary carefully the while, taking in critically each additional shade of sullenness as it flitted over her face, and being zealous in the taking of keen mental notes about the faltering purpose there was in the hand that clasped and fitfully released the door-bell.

"And you will come away the moment I tell you that your presence distresses her?"

"I will come away the instant my presence distresses her," he answered, promptly.

"Come on, then," she said quickly, ringing the bell sharply as she spoke; and the next moment the door was opened by the man whose manner had struck Gilbert as being alternately sycophantic and melodramatically pretentious on the night of (Gilbert Denham's) first dining there.

"What, Emmy!" he ejaculated. And then he caught sight of Miss Vicary's companion; and retaining a firm grasp of the door, he came a step outside, and looked from one to the other with a glance like a corkscrew.

"Mr. Denham has got me to promise him an introduction to my sister Clarice, Mr. Car-

ter," Emmy explained, in reply to his mute interrogation.

"I thought you had more regard for her than to propose making her a spectacle," the man addressed as "Mr. Carter" answered. "I am sure Mr. Denham will take my word for it, as her—mental superintendent, shall I call myself?—that the unfortunate young lady is happier when left undisturbed."

There was something sly in the man's insinuating tones that irritated Gilbert Denham. "He is a slimy thing, and shall be made to crawl," was the resolve of the latter. But slimy things have the knack of slipping out of one's grasp, unless handled judiciously. Gilbert Denham was not the man to suffer any thing to slip out of his grasp by reason of injudicious handling.

He would not address the man—the subordinate who was manifestly merely one of the agents in this business, whatever it might turn out to be. He definitely addressed one of the principals without hesitation.

"Accident seems determined to intervene to prevent our becoming better acquainted, Miss Vicary," he said, quietly. "It is not for me to oppose your wishes; let me thank you for having seemed to wish to gratify mine."

It was his last card this, and he played it down boldly, as if he had been backed by all the honors of the same suit. It was his last card! And with it he won the trick.

"I didn't only seem, I really meant to gratify your wishes," she exclaimed, with a gasp. "Mr. Carter, please to let us pass—this is my business; I take the responsibility of Mr. Denham's visit to my sister entirely on my own shoulders."

The man she spoke to stood back as she desired him; and Gilbert Denham following her quickly before she had time to have a second

thought as to what she was doing, or to change her mind, found himself in a small octagon anteroom, which was furnished neatly and prettily, and hung round with a set of spiritedly-executed water-color drawings.

"The work of our poor young friend before her affliction," Mr. Carter said, introducing the drawings with a wave of his hand to Gilbert Denham's notice.

Up to this moment Miss Vicary had been slightly in advance of the two men, but at this juncture she came back a step or two.

"Will you go first, Mr. Carter?" she said; "we'll follow." And seeing something that looked like faltering in her step as she said this, Gilbert Denham offered her his arm, and compelled her to walk into Clarice's room by his side.

It all took place in a moment. Following closely on Mr. Carter's steps, they passed beneath some curtains that were raised by a pulley, through a door-way, and into a lofty, well-lighted room that was occupied by two women.

One of these stood by a window, and she was in the act of drawing up a blind, and was looking round consulting some one as to the exact height to which it should be raised, and the exact amount of light which she should admit. She was a stoutly-built, kindly-faced, middle-aged woman; and she looked precisely what she was—a nurse. Gilbert Denham's eyes and understanding took her in at a glance. Then they both turned to the contemplation of the other woman.

She was sitting at a table with her back to them as they came on from the door-way; her left elbow planted on the table, her left cheek resting on her clenched hand—and what a tiny white clenched hand it was, Gilbert Denham instantly noticed. Her figure was slender. "It ought to have been far plumper and rounder," he thought, as he remarked the width of the well-modeled shoulders. A mass of soft-looking, bright, yellow hair was gathered up into a large roll at the back of her head. Her plain black silk dress hung in rich graceful folds about her. Around her altogether there was an air of refinement which startled him in Mrs. Waldron's daughter.

In the one moment of pausing on entering the room, he saw and appreciated all these things. Then that moment passed—he and his companions advanced into the room, and the lady at the table raised her head from her hand, turned round and looked at them.

An exclamation of unbounded mingled pity and admiration burst from his heart, and was

only half checked on his lips as he looked into this woman's face for the first time. He had anticipated seeing a certain amount of wrecked prettiness. But there was an expression in the dark, soft, violet eyes of the woman before him—a look of such unutterable despair, in her white, wasted, but still more lovely face, that stirred him strangely.

There was not the faintest trace of confusion, violence, or excitement in her manner or countenance, as she quietly regarded her visitors for a few moments. A look of repulsion, of loathing almost, came into her eyes as they rested on her sister, but this was but for a second. Her gaze traveled on to Gilbert, and rested there.

And as it rested on him, he studied her with an intensity that made Emmeline Vicary quail.

Clarice had crossed her arms before her on the table over a drawing-board on which she had been trying to trace the outlines of some vaguely remembered scene. It was a wistful, anxious face that was uplifted to their view. But he would never have discerned that she was mentally afflicted from the expression.

The dominating expression of both her person and manner was refinement. It pervaded her whole aspect with a subtle power that made him marvel at her being the sister of the woman by his side. A sudden longing to hear her voice—to discover if its tones were harmonious with her appearance, seized him.

"Won't you speak to your sister?" he whispered to Emmeline Vicary; "doesn't she know you?"

His tones, low as they were, caught the ear of the lady at the table. As Emmeline stiffly approached Clarice, the latter pushed her chair from the table slightly, and leaning back in it, and clasping her hands together with nervous uncertain force in her lap, she said complainingly,

"Why have you come here, Emily, when I have not sent for you; and why do you come to me dressed in this absurd way? You know I have never approved of it; it is a style that does not become your station, and when young women dress out of their station mischief invariably comes of it. As some one used to say."

Her manner was coherent enough, and her words were arranged in proper sequence. But a chill fell on Gilbert Denham's hopes as he listened to her. There was a want of purpose in her voice and her management of the same that belied the sanity he had fancied he had seen in her face. Somehow or other in spite of the strong appeal her lovely despairing face

had made to his sympathies, these latter veered round to Miss Vicary as he saw how abashed and humiliated she seemed by her mad sister's rebuke.

"I am sorry that you are vexed to see me, Clarice." Miss Vicary managed to utter these words presently, but she did so with such an obvious effort that she invested their bald simplicity with a wealth of possible meaning.

"I protest against the familiarity," the sister, who was bereft of reason, replied, rising from her chair as she spoke, and quivering with angry emotion. "I know that it's useless my protesting. I know that my protests fall on callous ears. I know I'm *mad* to value them; but—"

She hesitated, looked round at the man Emmeline had called Mr. Carter, and burst out crying in a forlorn hopeless way that was infinitely distressing to Gilbert Denham. Still, for all the distress the sight occasioned him, he could not, he would not, tear himself away from the study of it.

"Her moods are variable," Carter said, crossing over to Gilbert Denham. "I should strongly advise that you go away now."

"Who is this man? Is he one of their people?" Clarice was addressing Carter now, and she palpably included all the race of Vicary when she asked if he was one of "their" people.

"He is a friend of mamma's," Emmeline interposed, "and of mine, too, which is the reason he wished to know my sister," she added, bluntly and defiantly.

More anger, a fuller emotion evidently swept over Clarice's soul and "possessed" it as it were. The sweet violet eyes dilated, flashed, and then grew dim behind the tears that rushed from them. In her pitiful powerlessness (how that powerlessness was expressed in every feature), she turned to the chair she had just left, and caught hold of its back for support as she shook out these words—

"Oh! my memory, my memory! Why can't I even remember how to prove that they lie? *My* sister wouldn't keep a cat shut up in this way; and you call *yourself* 'my sister.'"

"You see how unreasonable she is," Emmeline muttered. "She's always like this—always giving herself absurd airs, and pretending all sorts of things; come away now; you haven't spoken to her even—what is the good of staying."

"I will speak now," he said, in the same tone, and then he advanced in an easy matter-of-fact way to the side of the poor shaken girl,

who was struggling painfully to suppress her sobs, and said,

"Will you allow me to look at your sketch?"

She turned large surprised eyes on him at once.

"Yes, you may look if you like; but it's from what I haven't got any longer, 'Memory,'" she replied, "it's meant to be a sketch of a lovely place I saw when every place on earth was lovely to me."

"Ah! a bit of the Mediterranean coast?" he suggested, affecting to look critically at the sketch, where some shaky strokes represented the land line, and a splash of blue the waters of a severely circular bay.

"I don't know," Clarice answered, drooping wearily down into her chair, leaning both elbows on the table, and making wedges of both hands for her face to rest upon, as she contemplated the work of art under discussion. "Where was it? Can you remember, Emily?" she continued, turning her head slightly with a natural air of command to her sister in the background.

Miss Vicary stepped forward, looked at the sketch, lifted her eyes with an air of weary deprecation for Gilbert's benefit, and then replied that she "could not call the spot to mind at the moment."

"Can you, *you*?" Clarice resumed, addressing Mr. Carter, impatiently, drumming on the table with the little hand that was again folded up tightly together the while. "Do make an effort!" she continued, a smile that would have been malicious if it had brightened a less fair face, beaming over hers suddenly, "do make an effort! I like to hear you bungle over foreign names."

"Clarice is not amiable!" was Gilbert Denham's mental comment, "but she's a marvelous flower to have bloomed on such a family tree as the Vicarys'."

"Miss Clarice is about to have one of her most trying attacks, I fear," Carter said, in an insolent kind of style, aside to Gilbert. "I should strongly recommend any one to depart who does not desire to see an unseemly exhibition."

"Come, Mr. Denham," Emmeline pleaded, and there were tears in her eyes as she spoke. Gilbert, after the manner of men when they like a woman, believed that these tears flowed from pity's pure fount, that they were in very truth crystal tributes of sympathy for her sister. It might possibly have occurred to a clear-visioned observer of her own sex that they were tears of mortification and annoyance at the ex-

pression of ardent admiration which had lived on Gilbert's face from the moment of his gaze first falling on the blonde beauty who had lost what she called her Memory; and they affirmed to be her reason.

"Come, Mr. Denham!" Emmeline repeated, with an impatient accent that Gilbert saw fit to disregard.

"Good-morning," he said very gently to Clarice, holding his hand out with an air of appeal as he spoke.

"Good-bye," she answered, promptly giving him hers without hesitation.

"Must this be good-bye? may I not call on you again?"

"Call on me? nonsense! come, if they will let you in—which I doubt their doing, as you seem to like me," she wound up with sharply, glancing suspiciously at her sister.

"Always unjust to me—always at her worst when I am near her," Emmeline pouted ominously. "Do come away, Mr. Denham, if you don't want to see a thunderbolt launched at my head. Good-bye, Clarice."

"It's folly calling me by a name that was never mine, even if I have lost my memory," Clarice replied, and there was again a degree of provocation that was almost insolent in her manner. Then, as at last her visitors turned to leave her, she resumed the attitude she had been in when they entered the room, and recommenced daubing brilliant colors over her drawing-board.

"A wreck, you see, a complete wreck," Mr. Carter said, in a confidential tone, to Gilbert, as they walked the length of the picture-gallery together. It was far from the fair Emmeline's desire that the duet she had designed executing with Gilbert should be turned into a trio in this way. But she had submitted quietly, though sullenly enough. For it was a received axiom with the mother and daughter whom he served, that "Carter always had a meaning and motive for every thing he did.

"A wreck that may be rebuilt and refitted into as fair a form as it ever wore, if proper means are taken," Gilbert replied. "Your sister is a lovely creature, Miss Vicary—"

"—You have seen her at her best," Emmeline interrupted.

"Indeed! I understood from you that she is always at her worst in your presence; this has been an exceptional occasion, then, I infer."

"She was always jealous of me from the first moment she set eyes on me," Miss Vicary was beginning in tones of concentrated rage, when Carter interposed.

"It is quite idle on your part to attempt to explain or to account for the freaks and prejudices of the insane, Miss Vicary; and this gentleman I believe I am right in supposing to be as slightly informed on the subject as yourself? Never make the mistake of advancing excuses for the madness of a mad person."

They had come to the head of the stairs by this time, and as the two men drew back to allow the lady to precede them, Gilbert Denham managed to mutter the following words for Mr. Carter's benefit, unheard by Emmeline.

"She is far too sane for any thing like coercion or restraint to be justifiable in her case; don't you think it might be awkward for you professionally if a legal inquiry were made into the condition of that poor girl."

"I have not the slightest fear for my professional reputation, nor of your interference," Mr. Carter replied, blandly; "but I would advise you not to dabble in what solely concerns her mother; it will rebound on your head, and on the heads of those nearest to you, if you do."

"Thanks—but don't trouble yourself to be cautious on my account," Gilbert laughed lightly, emphasizing the last two words. And then he ran down and rejoined Emmeline, leaving Carter on the top stair in doubt as to whether his warning had been received with consideration or with contumely.

"But you'll surely stay to luncheon?" Emmeline exclaimed, as Gilbert began taking leave of her in the hall.

"Thank you, not to-day. I have promised myself to my sister."

He spoke hurriedly, the fact being that his mind was thrown off its balance for the moment by the startling discrepancy there was between the mad woman he had imagined, and the mad woman he had seen. He wanted to get away by himself, and endeavor to analyze the vague, uncomfortable feeling of doubt that almost amounted to fear, which had seized him in her presence. He wanted to do this before he spoke about her to any one—especially before he spoke about her to Miss Vicary.

But Miss Vicary disliked the idea of being balked of the prey which she had pursued into dangerous places. The risk she had run would seem to be for nothing if Gilbert got away from her now. Moreover, she did not desire to bear the brunt of her mother's anger at her rash exhibition of Clarice alone.

"But when I ask you as a favor to stay here with us—with me?" she asked in her softest tones, and again the ordinarily composed face was stirred, and slightly bent down in a flush

of unwonted confusion. And he remembered that the onus was on him still of pleasing this woman, and he was a man, and so pleasantly conscious that he had the power of pleasing her whenever he had the will, and so—he staid!

In some undefinable way he found himself treated very much as if he were the private property of the young lady in whose society he had spent the long hours of the morning. Her mother gave him her left hand to shake when he came into the room—she had carefully picked up something fragile with her right, the instant she caught sight of him. Further she insisted on explaining away this slight breach of social observance.

“It’s nearest to the heart, we used to say in my young days, Mr. Denham, and though I’m the mother of such a grown-up daughter, my young days are not so long over neither.”

“One look at you suffices to convince a man of that; but the law of compensation works; youth is glorious, but to be the mother of two such grown-up daughters as you have is more glorious still.”

Mrs. Waldron fluttered and moved her arms in her usual gypsy queen-like way, as if she were about to wrap herself in the folds of an imaginary cloak.

“Ah! my poor Clarice,” she presently said, in what was meant to be a resigned tone, but which failed to portray resignation by reason of the ghastliness of the apparent effort with which it was made; “my poor, poor child; she is a pitiable spectacle, and it hurts me to hear any one refer to *her* in the same breath as her sister.”

“Mr. Denham has seen Clarice, mamma,” Emmeline put in, and there was a light air of warning in the way she said it.

“Seen Clarice!” Mrs. Waldron exclaimed. Then, to the surprise of every one, the strong, stalwart woman turned pale with the anguish of fainting as she feebly muttered,

“Then we’re— God forgive us!”

“Mother! mother! mother!” Emmeline cried, in encouraging, re-assuring, reminding accents. “Mr. Denham has seen my unfortunate sister, but her unhappy state has not taught him to despise *us*. You’re too sensitive.”

“Far too sensitive about it,” Gilbert said, coolly. “Miss Clarice’s state is not perfectly satisfactory at present—so much I must admit—but it will be entirely so in a short time, I should say, if she is subjected to different treatment from that of Mr. Carter.”

“We have the greatest reliance on Mr. Carter’s judgment and kindness,” the mother said, determinedly, recovering herself, and steadying herself under the influence of some long looks from her daughter.

“Then your reliance is misplaced, I am inclined to think,” Gilbert said, lightly. And as at that moment the object under discussion entered the room, Mrs. Waldron was spared the necessity of answering a man of whom she already stood in fear.

“Make him love you, Emmy? Emmy, make him love you,” she said, almost fiercely to her daughter, when the latter was about to start for the Bridge House that night. “Tie his hands through chaining his heart—for he’s on the track, Emmy, he’s on the track, and if he follows it up all my labor for you is lost.”

“The labor has been for yourself, mother,” Emmy answered, scornfully; “but all the same if I can I’ll tie his hands.”





CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE BRIDGE HOUSE AGAIN.

"GILBERT, I hope you won't crush me by telling me that I have done something that I had better have left undone, on this occasion especially," Mrs. Arthur Waldron said, addressing her brother laughingly, and disregarding the cloud of thought and bewilderment that was lowering over her brother's brow.

"What have you done, Horry, dear? Wait a minute, though, till I've breathed a little of the air that is not full of the choke-damp of mystery."

"No, no; mine is an utterly unimportant communication, after all. I'll out with it at once. Frank Stapylton has been here, and I asked him to come this evening. That is my news. But, Gilbert, what is yours?"

"That I am more completely at sea—more perfectly puzzled than I have ever been since I first put on my considering-cap about this business of yours."

"You have succeeded, then, in seeing the idiot sister?"

Horatia Waldron asked the question with an amount of eager vehemence that was perfectly natural and justifiable, considering all the circumstances of the case. But natural and justifiable as it was, it appeared to jar upon her brother.

"I have seen the—a—the lady who has been spoken of as a sister and an idiot by that mass of perverted feeling and cleverness, Miss Vicary."

He spoke impulsively; there was a warm flush over his brow. Evidently some very strong sympathy, some emotion that was more powerful than pity, had been roused in cool, debonair Gilbert Denham.

"And is she such a distressing spectacle as they had led you to suppose? Is she too utterly bereft of reason for us to hope for any clue from her that may lead us into the right

path, the path that may lead to the overthrow of the Vicarys?"

The rights of her boy were at stake, and the thought that they were so, that he had been defrauded of them in some way by those people of whom she was speaking, brought the bright color to Horatia's face and a ringing cadence into her voice.

"You'd pass over any body's prostrate form in pursuing that path, I believe, Horry," her brother said, meditatively.

"I would, I would. Let me once more see the path, and armed with my sense of little Gerald's rights and wrongs, I would tread it unflinchingly, even if a hundred foes or friends opposed my course and bid me turn back. But tell me of this woman."

"This woman is the loveliest, sweetest creature I ever saw in my life," Gilbert answered, slowly. "She is no more bereft of reason than you are; she has no more Vicary blood in her than you have; and she is kept a prisoner in their house for some purpose of their own, which I shall find out by-and-by."

"Gilbert!" The sister's face grew very pale, and an indescribable air of flagging in spirit came over her. "Gilbert, do you think that she is an undeveloped antagonistic influence?"

"I don't care to speculate about her. I have a presentiment that before long I shall arrive at some certain conclusion concerning the reason why they are treating her as they do. Meanwhile, feel as sure as I do that she can never be antagonistic to any one whose cause is good."

"Supposing she shares the Vicary family feelings," Horry persisted; "supposing she comes back to liberty and reason, and, backed up by the charms that have bewildered you, declares for these people who have in some

way robbed my boy? What will you say then? Will you be a traitor to me, Gilbert, for the sake of a fair face? Will you cease to believe that Gerald's cause is good because she is antagonistic to it?"

He took his sister's hands at this, and held them firmly, while he looked into her face.

"If her cause is ever antagonistic to your boy's, Horry," he said, in a low voice, "it will be because your boy has no cause at all. We won't take fright at shadows, though, dear. At the same time, we must not shut our eyes to some things that we would rather not see. I'm glad Stapylton is coming to-night; he's a nice fellow, and will save you from dwelling too much on the Vicary mystery in Miss Vicary's presence."

"And I am sorry that you should have seen the mad Miss Vicary," Horatia persisted. "Probably they had prompted her to say a number of things that would help to bear out their story. Now, she would not have imposed on me, simply because she is an innocent agent in the imposition, aided by a pretty face. Did you get her to say a word about her stepfather?"

"Her what?"

"Her stepfather. Poor George Waldron was her stepfather, of course. I think I should have tested her by mentioning him."

"It didn't occur to me to put her to the test in such a way," Gilbert answered, uneasily.

"I wonder if I can ingratiate myself with Emmeline to-night sufficiently to induce her to let me see her sister."

"Let me entreat you, in the name of common sense, for your own sake and your child's, don't attempt to do it. Both mother and daughter are as suspicious already as cats over poisoned meat, and if you say a word to Emmy, Emmy will interpose herself, a mountain of reserve, between me and my goal."

Mrs. Arthur Waldron smiled, and shook her head.

"I don't like it, Gilbert; I don't like any of it. I know to-night that you will, by your manner to Miss Vicary, make my face burn at the thoughts of Bessie; and the Vicary wrath will be hot and heavy when they find out that your intentions to Emmeline have been meaningless and empty, by reason of there being a Mrs. Gilbert Denham already."

"Our armory is too badly supplied for you to quarrel with my choice of weapons," her brother replied, quickly. "Poor Bessie! she need never fear that the shadow of unfaithfulness to her will fall on my heart on account of Miss Vicary."

"What a trouble life is!" Horatia sighed, knitting her brows.

"Life being a bore, I think we had better dine," Gilbert laughed. And then they sat down to dinner, and the conversation veered round to Frank Stapylton.

"It's a great pleasure to me to meet any one who knew Arthur so well as Mr. Stapylton did," Arthur's widow began, pathetically.

"Yes; more especially as he's such an uncommonly nice fellow," her brother replied, practically.

"He has asked if we will go over and lunch at his place, Gilbert, while you're here. He spoke about including those odious people from Larpington House in his invitation, and I didn't feel quite justified in saying 'don't.'"

"I am glad you didn't. *He* might have thought you hardly justified, and have disregarded your demurrer—and that would have been awkward for you."

"I had no fear of *that* before my eyes," Horatia said, tossing her head ever so slightly, "only I thought it would have a look of inconsistency, as he is to meet the junior member of that most obnoxious firm here to-night. I shouldn't like Mr. Stapylton to think me inconsistent or weak at all, for Arthur's sake."

"My dear Horry, how heartily I shall hail the day when women cease to think it necessary to go through a little bit of the Suttee business."

"What do you mean, Gilbert? No, don't tell me. If you think that I am capable of feigning feeling and falsifying motive in this manner, then I no longer care either for your meaning or your opinion."

She spoke with a heightened color, truly, but with tones that were not raised in the slightest degree. She was in a genuine, womanly rage; but her brother liked her for it, and admired her for the way she portrayed it.

"My meaning is very simple, and very far from being offensive, Horry, dear," he said affectionately. "It is a form of Suttee, the spirit of deprecation in which some very sweet and sensible women whose husbands have died, always speak of the possibility of their regard for other men, or other men's regard for them. Why on earth shouldn't you desire that this young fellow should think you 'consistent,' and other admirable things, for your own sake, as well as for Arthur's?"

"We really need not go into the subject in this exhaustive way, Gilbert," she answered, lightly. "Granted that I spoke in a way that strikes you as being too set, too conventional, too

carefully copied from the pattern the world has cut for us, you must admit that your words would bear an interpretation that might hurt me a little. I love Arthur's memory too well, I am too thoroughly devoted to Arthur's children, to care very much about other men's opinion of me."

"Our friends are coming in time to save you from proceeding with your defense," he laughed, as a peal at the front-door bell announced the advent of one of the guests. Then he went over to her, and held the face, over which a half-pouting expression had crept up, and kissed her brow. "My dear little sister," he said, more gravely, "if it isn't Frank Stapyhton, it will be some other man, I hope. I'm tired of your sacrificing yourself to the idea of little Gerald's future magnificence. If the boy is ever to have his own—if it is his own to have—he will gain it without his mother going through the mildest form of *Suttee* on his account."

He had to drop his voice, and speak his last words in a very indistinct tone, and Horatia had not a moment in which to answer him; for the door was opened, and Emmeline Vicary, in a refulgent *demi-toilette* that seemed to bellow all over the room, was upon them.

Her mother's last words were ringing in her ears, and though, as a rule, her mother's words were not what she cared to dwell upon very carefully, still, now she did attach greater weight to them, and did mean to act up to the spirit of their advice. Her inclination and her duty marched well together, and were equally potent in their demands upon her to make this man identify his interests with her own as soon as possible.

They were not at all in harmony, these three who were brought together thus. The hostess half believed that her brother and her guest had a secret understanding. The guest half believed the same thing of her friend and her hostess. Gilbert Denham was the only one of the three, in fact, who was not disturbed in the slightest degree by the thoughts of the other two.

In justice to Miss Vicary's powers of appreciation, it must be stated that from the very onset she never underrated the magnitude of the task that was before her. She realized fully that in this contest a woman endowed with every womanly charm was ranged against her. Emmeline Vicary knew that family feeling, cultivation, a sense of right, and the sympathy of the world were one and all enrolled under Mrs. Arthur Waldron's banner. And with all this knowledge to the fore, she did not fear the fate

that might be before her too much. She dared as much, almost, as a thorough-bred could have dared, in confronting Gilbert Denham's sister this night.

For the course was such a dangerous one! It was so full of patrician pitfalls for her plebeian feet! Nevertheless, she was a dangerous adversary for that gently-born, honest woman, who was awaiting her in fear and trembling. For Emmeline was utterly unscrupulous. She had so much to gain, and so little to lose. And, additionally, she was sufficiently in love with Gilbert Denham to soften and subdue herself, and generally put herself at her best.

By-and-by matters were made much pleasanter for them all by the arrival of Frank Stapyhton. Constraint vanished in his presence, as ice does before the sun, for he was not at this juncture sufficiently fascinated by the fair widow to feel awkward in her society. That stage had not been arrived at, although an experienced eye could have detected that he was fast approaching it.

But this night he was heart (or fancy) free enough to be entertaining—a thing a man in love never can be, by any chance, save to the woman he is in love with; and so, under his influence, the reign of ease was inaugurated, and the quartette divided in a natural manner. Gilbert Denham and his prey conversing in low tones on the sofa, Horatia Waldron and her prey at the piano, where the lady warbled him along skillfully toward that stage which, it has been distinctly stated, had not yet been reached by him when he came in.

Emmeline was the first to revert to the subject of the morning's excitement, and she did it judiciously.

"I can't tell you what a relief it is both to mamma and myself to find that poor Clarice made such a favorable impression upon you," she said, softly.

"And I can't tell you how glad I am that I succeeded in overcoming your scruples about my seeing her," he replied, heartily. "What a pretty attractive woman she is! Let me instill into you a portion of my own firm belief in her ultimate perfect recovery."

Miss Vicary shook her head. "If she did recover, Mr. Denham," she said, with a heightened color, "it would not be for your happiness nor for mine," she added, in a faltering undertone that was designed to make him suppose that she was suffering from a preliminary pang of jealousy on account of her lovely sister's superior charms. Gilbert Denham

knew well what she meant him to believe; but though he was a man, and though he thought that she was in love with him, he did not put faith in the sincerity of her suggestion.

Her remark was a perplexing one—or it would have been a perplexing one to a less ready man than Gilbert Denham. Even he hesitated for a moment before he replied to it. Then he went on his self-selected path more recklessly than before.

“Your fear is groundless.” He almost whispered these words, for he shrank from letting his sister hear how far he was going in her cause. “Your sister, under any circumstances, will be powerless to affect our relations toward one another. Try to trust me fully.”

He was leaning forward, bending slightly in her direction as he spoke, and one of his hands was resting on the sofa between Emmeline and himself. Suddenly, as he said “trust me fully,” her hand slipped into his, and bending down to meet his gaze, she spoke his name, “Gilbert!” with a passionate softness that told of her being terribly in earnest.

“Let us talk of the sweetest topic in the world, Emmeline,” he muttered, and his anxiety to get to the bottom of the mystery of Larpington House caused him to mutter it very ardently. “Let us talk of the sweetest topic in the world, Emmeline. Tell me your sister’s love-story.”

“Her love-story is the most painful topic in the world to me, instead of being the sweetest,” Miss Vicary answered, pettishly.

“Did she love beneath her or above her, a star or a clod?” he persisted, and he constrained himself, in his anxiety for an answer, to press Emmeline’s hand rather more closely.

“How keen you are about it!” she replied, with awkward jealousy. “Why will you think so much of Clarice, and so little of me?”

“Clarice has been the means of furthering our intimacy greatly. I consider that I owe her a debt of gratitude. In winning an introduction to her, I have won a more complete knowledge of you.”

“And now that you have the more complete knowledge of me, what good will it do you or me?” she asked, earnestly. And Gilbert shrugged his shoulders, and thought,

“Verily, a determined young woman, this! How is it all to end?”

Aloud he said,

“This much good, at any rate—it is making the present pass more pleasantly, and time is young. We can afford to let the future take care of itself.”

“Shall you be here so much longer, that you can afford to waste time with me by idle talk of Clarice?” she asked, boldly.

“Shall I say that I shall stay here while my sister and yourself care to have me? And shall I add, that if I am bidden I may remain at Larpington altogether.”

“All this is very fine and very flattering,” Miss Vicary thought, shrewdly; “but none of it’s an offer of marriage, or even a declaration of love. He must say something more definite than he has already said, before mamma will believe that I haven’t been foolishly rash and over-confident in showing him Clarice.”

“Mr. Denham,” she murmured, suddenly, “are you aware that all this time you have been holding my hand?”

“Quite aware of it; and before I relinquish it you shall pledge yourself to show perfect and entire confidence in me,” he whispered. And her fervid “I will,” in reply, sounded ominous.

“I can’t bear cautious women,” Gilbert Denham went on. “Caution in a man is a barely endurable quality, but in a girl it’s simply appalling. I shouldn’t like to think, for instance, that you were hedging yourself round with a lot of small mysteries and precautionary measures. I shouldn’t like to think that you put even an invisible fence up between yourself and me.”

“What do you mean?” She grew red and bewildered, and the pair at the piano ceased their strains at the same inopportune moment; and, altogether, Gilbert Denham had the feeling upon him of being snatched from sudden destruction just as he was on the brink of compromising himself most horribly.

“Miss Vicary, won’t you play something for us, or sing something?” Horatia asked, rising from the music-stool as she spoke, and presenting a perplexed countenance to the still more perplexed occupants of the sofa. The truth was, that the last words which Horatia had been persuaded to warble to Frank Stapyllton were charged with such fervor that they seemed to herself, as she sang them with feeling, like an admission of some sentiment which she was most anxious to conceal from him. All her brother’s remarks about the special form of Suttie which she had indicated an intention of practicing, rankled in her memory, and caused her to feel and display an amount of agitation which, she felt painfully certain, Frank Stapyllton would attribute to—the right cause. In her confusion, she turned and addressed Miss Vicary, calling down Miss Vicary’s curses and her brother’s blessings on her head for inter-

rupting them at what Emmeline believed to be a delicate crisis.

Frank Stapylton, too, the disturbing element, was a little disappointed, and altogether thrown out of gear, by the abrupt termination to the fair romance he had just begun composing. There had been something alternately soothing and thrilling in watching that pretty woman's mobile face, and listening to her rich, soft contralto, as she sang different versions of the old, old story, with himself for her sole audience. It had come to him to feel that it would be pleasant to watch that face and listen to that voice often—perhaps always! And just as this feeling had developed, and imparted additional intensity and ardor to his gaze, Horatia had suddenly wheeled round and addressed Miss Vicary—and lo! the dream was dispelled!

With a man's perversity, the moment the check came, Mr. Stapylton became more eager in the pursuit. He had told himself, or rather allowed himself to feel, on first seeing her, that if she had not been the widow of his old friend, Arthur Waldron, she was gifted with precisely that sort of grace, and beauty, and intelligence which would have taken captive his unoccupied heart. But to-night, under the influence of the evidently happy feeling which had inspired her as she sang words of tenderness to him, he had erased the saving clause, and declared to himself that the fact of her widowhood, or rather of her former wifeness, would no longer intervene. Nothing that was past had the power of making her other than she was in the present, and that was simply the woman most to be cov-

eted as a wife, of any woman he had ever seen. As he thought of his old home with her in it as its mistress, he felt inclined to break all bonds of prudence and etiquette, and tell her at once to what extent he was a slave and she a victor. And so, when she turned away, and made as though she would have joined her brother and Miss Vicary, he followed her closely, feeling ten times more eager than he had been while the opportunity was his own at the piano.

Miss Vicary could play, and sing too, after a fashion—a fashion that made the ears to tingle, and the understanding totter, of the cultivated minority. However, on this occasion she made a noise, and so Frank Stapylton was grateful when, under cover of a crushing series of wrong notes, he contrived to whisper to his hostess,

"Do take a turn round the garden in the moonlight. It's not very cold, and I want to tell you something."

"What about?" she asked, uneasily, and then she blushed at her own uneasiness, grew confused, and weak, and remorseful.

"What about! Oh, about George Waldron's marriage," he replied, adroitly fixing on a topic that he knew would fetch her from her stronghold of confused reserve. And when he said that, she went out with him without hesitation—without a single thought of Suttee.

"And now, Gilbert," Miss Vicary began, pausing in her playing at once as the other pair went out through the window, "will you tell me exactly what you mean by objecting to even an invisible fence between us?"





CHAPTER IX.

"ARTHUR WAS RIGHT."

"WHAT do I mean?" Gilbert Denham repeated the words she had addressed to him with a force and intensity that came from his desire to gain time. He knew well enough himself what he "meant"—to screw her secret from her at any price. But he also knew that the abrupt disclosure of his meaning, in what she would probably think its "naked deformity," would startle her clear away from the confessional.

The time that he deemed necessary for his purpose he gained very easily after all. His hand was clasping hers, his arm was round her waist, her face was shrouding itself upon his shoulder, and the position was one that the lady was apparently in no haste to free herself from. It fell to his part to make the separating move; and having realized that it was in his part, he made it decisively.

He rose up, still holding her hands in his, and stood before her. Love-blinded as she was, it struck her that there was more of the jailer fastening on the handcuffs than of the lover in his grasp. Love-blinded as she was, too, she saw that his penetrating gaze was not concentrated upon the discovery of any veiled love for him which she might be jealously guarding, and she shrank and turned away from it with a sickening sensation of coming evil upon her.

"I mean this," he said, slowly, "that I would shut my heart against a woman who withheld a confidence, however unimportant that confidence might be, from me."

"And would you never close it against one who risked every thing in reposing a confidence?" she asked, eagerly. "Oh, Gilbert, there's nothing that I wouldn't sacrifice for you, and to you; but if I told you the only secret I have, it wouldn't do you any good, and those you love would be no better for it."

"Let me be the judge of that," he said. He would have risked, dared, courted any danger then for the sake of carrying his point.

"And what is to be my reward?"

She uttered the words with a hot, clear force that startled him. It was quite evident that she was ready to part with her secret; but she would sell it, would fix the price, and see it paid, and would not contemplate the weakness of giving it away, whatever persuasive power he might put on.

And so he named a price, with a lowered head, with an humbled heart, with a ghastly conviction growing upon him, that in some at present unforeseen way he would be enabled to pay it, and would shrink from doing so.

His naming of a price—his surrender, as she rightly deemed it—gave Emmeline Vicary a power she had never experienced before in her intercourse with this man.

"The reward you offer would be ample for a far more valuable prize than I shall be, Gilbert," she said, with an affectedly light depreciation of herself that was infinitely irksome and wearisome to the man who wanted her secret and not her silliness.

"Let me be the judge of that, as I said before," he replied.

"No, no; I have always discouraged impatience and curiosity on principle. I will only gratify yours by telling you poor Clarice's story on the day that it will become my duty to obey you. When I'm your wife, you will find that I have no concealments from you. Shall you tell your sister to-night?"

"Tell her what?"

"That we are engaged; that you have proposed to me, and I have accepted you."

He almost groaned as he turned away from her. Her words put the position in which he had placed himself before her in a horribly

strong light. Yet she was justified in using those words. The sentence he had used in naming the price he would pay would indisputably bear the interpretation she had put upon it.

The conviction that he never could pay it—the reflection that the ability to do so would simply be odious to him—the remembrance of good, trusting, unexactg Bessie, his wife—all these rushed into his mind in a moment as Emeline so unmistakably evinced her determination to have her pound of flesh. And so it was, with a hardly-suppressed groan, that he turned away from her suggestion that he should tell his sister of the treachery, the perfidy, the bitter folly he had been guilty of this night, on account of her boy's unestablished rights.

But he knew that to falter in seeming would be to rouse Miss Vicary's suspicions, and to undo the work he had been laboring at so assiduously lately. So he told himself that just for a little while longer he would play his false part, and when it had won him what he wanted he would proclaim himself a married man, and openly avow the real motive of his deception.

"No; let us keep our secret, the secret of our attachment, of the unpremeditated regard which has sprung up between us, for a time," he answered. And then he added, fearing to trust himself alone with her any longer, "Shall we go out and join the others?"

"As you like," she said, sulkily. She hated the suggestion of delay. Delay meant danger to her before she became Gilbert Denham's wife. After that coveted consummation, she cared not what happened. "For his will surely never be the hand to throw me down and proclaim me an impostor, when I'm his wife," she argued.

But in spite of her sulkiness, he was firm now.

"Yes, let us join the others. I'll tell you why," he said, with an air of eagerness that was assumed, and the assumption of which Miss Vicary saw through clearly. "Horry has some absurd notions about everlasting devotion and fidelity to the memory of her late husband, and she will worry herself all night with the idea that she has been doing violence to these two qualities if we let Stapylton keep her out *tête-à-tête* any longer."

"It seemed to me that she was willing enough to go," Miss Vicary muttered. "I believe, too, that you are tired of our *tête-à-tête*, and that it's not consideration for your sister only that makes you in such a hurry to join her."

"Larpington House stands out well in the moonlight—let us go and look at it."

"I wish I had never seen Larpington House," she cried, with quick, savage energy. "I wish I had never heard of it. I shall come to some dreadful sorrow through my connection with Larpington House. I feel sure of that."

"Are those your sentiments really?" he asked. "And all the time outsiders fancy that you are enjoying the thought of your future proprietorship. Indeed," here he looked at her keenly, "some people go so far as to assert that it is on account of your pride in being the sole heiress that you show so little sisterly distress about your sister Clarice."

There swept across her face, at this, such a look of pained uncertainty, of doubt, and distress, that, out of mere manly pity for the "weaker vessel," he exclaimed, hurriedly,

"I didn't mean to hurt you by the allusion. I only mentioned it as a proof of the manner in which rumor misrepresents people."

"You think me unnatural about Clarice, don't you?" she interrogated. Then suddenly she changed the form of her inquiry, and asked, "You would think worse of me for being callous about a sister's sorrow than about any thing else, wouldn't you?"

"I should," he said, decisively.

"Well then, I tell you—no, I don't think I can tell you to-night. I don't think I dare risk any thing to-night. I should like to be *quite* happy a little longer."

This tone of pathos was a new thing in her. Hitherto she had vibrated between being over-demonstrative and unpleasantly morose and glum. The new phase was more fetching naturally to a man, and like a man Gilbert Denham responded to it kindly and injudiciously.

"I shall regret it deeply if I am ever the cause of unhappiness coming to you."

"Yet you will be the cause of the greatest unhappiness to me and to others," she said, hesitatingly. "You can't help yourself. If you don't betray the confidence I repose in you, I shall always feel that you're thinking of it, and thinking less well of me; and if you do betray it, there can be nothing but misery before me, look which way I will."

"We are drifting into a region of the most appalling verbal gloom," he said, lightly. "Come out and look for Horry." And so at last he carried his point of putting an end to confidential intercourse, for that night at least, between the determined Miss Vicary and himself.

The other pair, meanwhile, had not found the time long, nor the *tête-à-tête* embarrassing in the smallest degree. There was far less confusion for Mrs. Arthur Waldron in the fact of Frank Stapylton occasionally pressing the hand which rested on his arm, than there had been in the looks which lived in his eyes and would be answered while she had been singing. Moreover, the free night air wafted away nearly all the doubts and scruples which had beset her while sitting in a room in which each article of furniture was identified with Arthur's children and their right to her sole interest, and regard, and attention. Out in the garden, in the soft, sweet moonlight, she seemed to belong more to herself. And the result of this change of feeling was that she ceased to shudder and turn away from the thought of rendering a portion of her interest, and regard, and attention to the man by her side.

The most sheltered walk in the garden was one that, happily for Mr. Stapylton's designs of concentrating her attention on himself, did not command a view of Larpington House. And up and down this walk they sauntered, he talking of a topic that is invariably the most interesting to a woman when she is beginning to love a man, himself; she listening with a beautiful resignation to the circumstances that made her his only listener.

With the natural hunger that a woman feels when her heart is touched to hear if his has ever been touched by some happier woman, she approached the subject of his youth, and his manner of spending it.

"What made you flee your country in the way you did, when you were so young? Was it merely the real English roving spirit, or had you a reason?"

"Well, I was always an excitable fellow, fond of change of scene and variety of acquaintances," he confessed, with a laugh.

"Arthur used to say—" She checked herself, and he asked,

"What did he say? Tell me. That I was such a restless fellow that I should never settle down? He used to tell me that often."

"No; that was not what I was going to say. But perhaps I had better not say it."

How utterly feeble and meaningless these preliminaries sound to every other ear than the special one for whose benefit they are uttered. How thoroughly a third person is bored by the false starts two incipient lovers make perpetually before they get clear off on to the straight course of a perfect understanding. Yet for all the feebleness and meaninglessness of them to

others, one would not one's self be without the glorious experience that they aid in giving.

"Perhaps I had better not say it," the advocate for the observance of *Suttee* said, with a falter in her voice; and Frank Stapylton's answer was a pressure of her hand and the whispered words,

"You may say any thing to me—any thing you like. Whatever you say will be sure to be right."

He was getting more impressive every moment, and every moment Horatia's resolve to dedicate every soft and tender thought, for the remainder of her life, to the memory of her husband, who was growing weaker. Her remembrance of "what Arthur used to say" seemed to her like a direct interposition of Providence.

"He used to say that he thought you must have had a disappointment, and that that drove you to change of scene, in hopes that it might prove a panacea."

Even as she put the possibility of its having been the case to him, she fervently hoped that he would deny it; and affirm that Arthur had been mistaken. For wife, mother, widow as she was, there was still a certain amount of young, unsullied, womanly feeling about Horatia Waldron; and it would have been pleasant to know, if she ever did allow him to profess affection for herself, that he had never professed it for any one else.

It was a little depressing, therefore, for her, when he answered in sober, veracious accents,

"Arthur was right."

"Forgive me for having probed a wound," she cried, quickly. "I knew I had better have left my remark unsaid. How foolish I was!"

She spoke in such eager deprecation of her own indiscretion, that he had not the opportunity of stopping the flow of the stream of her self-reproach until it reached this juncture. But when she denounced herself as foolish, he said,

"Foolish! Any thing but that. There was sweet wisdom, as well as sweet kindness, in touching on a topic that a man never knows how he may treat until it is touched upon. Yes, Mrs. Waldron, Arthur was right. I was awfully fond of a girl when I was a young fellow; and it was the old story. Don't you know? She didn't care for me."

The words, "What a blind fool she must have been!" were on Horatia's lips, but she checked them, hard as the task of doing so was. A genuine woman is always intolerant to any indifference shown toward a man she

loves by another woman. However, Horatia constrained herself strongly, and merely said, in reply to his confession,

"Perhaps she cared for somebody else?"

"That was just it, don't you see? It was a quick thing altogether. I met her at a ball in Brighton, and she fetched me tremendously in the course of five round dances I had with her. Then I met her at a picnic; and then was her escort one day when we made up a riding-party. The end of it was that I, being an impulsive young fool, I suppose, proposed to her, and had for answer that she was already engaged."

"Was she pretty?" Horatia asked. Elsewhere I have registered my firm belief in this being the first question every woman asks about the one who has been preferred to her, or has preceded her, or in any way rivaled her.

His answer was distressingly decisive:

"She was beautiful—a glorious girl with golden hair, and eyes—well, eyes that were not a bit like any that I have ever seen in any other woman's face."

"And she married?" Horatia questioned, half hopefully. Fully as she intended immolating herself on the shrine of the deceased Arthur's memory, it would have given her a pang to hear that the woman Frank Stapylton had loved was still free.

"Yes; I believe she married. I have never heard of it; but in that one letter that I had from her she said she was 'going to be married very soon.' She didn't tell me my rival's name, or go into any details at all; and I was thankful that she didn't, for at the time I was too sore to care to have a well-defined idea of the man she preferred to me."

"And for her sake you have remained unmarried all these years?" Horatia continued, fluttering about a subject that was painful to her with that curious persistence which characterizes women when their hearts are touched.

"I can't profess such constancy," he said, with a laugh that was infinitely comforting to her. "The truth is, I got over it so rapidly that I was half ashamed of myself, it looked so uncommonly like shallowness of feeling, don't you know? I suppose the real reason of my remaining unmarried was, that I never saw any one I could fall in love with again, until lately."

His tones were very low as he said the last two words, and Horatia's heart fluttered in a way that she felt to be very reprehensible. The conviction was borne in upon her mind abruptly that the time was ripe as far as he

was concerned, and that if she did not administer a check to him, he would rashly force her to come to a decision, or to commit herself to the promise of coming to a decision this very night.

And this she certainly was not prepared to do, in spite of those pangs of self-reproach from which she was suffering. An hour ago she had told herself that if this man paid her the crowning honor of making her an open offer of his love, it would be her duty to her dead husband's memory, and to her living children's rights, to refuse him. But an hour had passed since she had given this judgment against herself, and the possibility of her being eventually induced to reverse it was already before her.

For during this hour they had talked of love, and although it was not of love for herself, the topic had touched her to additional tenderness. So, at least this night, she could not bring herself to make an end of this new strain of music which was fast making itself heard in her life. Accordingly, she put the subject away from her delicately, deftly, as only a woman can, stopped him from further speech about it just then in a way that was almost more pleasing to hear than if she had suffered him to pursue it, for he was a man who liked reserve in a woman—preferred wooing to being wooed, in fact.

"We'll talk about this another day, won't we?" she said, rather shyly. "In my pleasure in listening to you, I am forgetting all about my other guest." And just at that moment, very opportunely, Gilbert Denham and Miss Vicary stepped out into the garden, and the four marched up and down for a few minutes longer in line.

But they each and all found that there was no increase of happiness to any one of them by reason of this arrangement. To Horatia it appeared that all the silvery radiance had fled from the moonbeams, now that they fell on the form of Miss Vicary, who was stepping steadily along on the other side of Frank Stapylton. A woman, when she begins to be in love, is so prone to jealousy, that she is apt to invest every other woman who approaches "the object" with some indefinable charm which she was never suspected of possessing before. It actually now gave Mrs. Arthur Waldron a twinge of pain as she reflected, "George Waldron was to the full as attractive, refined, and clever, as Frank Stapylton, and George Waldron married this girl's mother. What if the daughter exercises the same sort of witchcraft over Frank Stapylton!" A chill

fell upon her suddenly, and she almost shuddered as she said,

"How much colder it has got, Miss Vicary! I shall get into disgrace with your mother if I keep you out in the night air, and send you home with a cough. How fascinating the fire looks from outside!" she added, passing in through the window as she spoke, and looking round, expecting to see the others follow her.

Frank Stapylton was the only one who obeyed her invitation. Miss Vicary put a detaining hand on Gilbert Denham's arm, and muttered,

"Stay out here for a minute, will you? You were anxious to come."

"And I'm delighted to remain," he answered, as lightly as his growing dread of her causing him to completely surrender would allow him to do.

"Shall I see you to-morrow?"

"Yes, probably; I mean certainly you will."

"Come farther away from the window," she said, impatiently, drawing him away into the shade. "Gilbert, you have grown cool to me with very curious quickness. What is the back-thought that has chilled you? Because I know you must have had one to have altered so suddenly."

"The thought of your want of confidence in me," he answered, in a low voice. "You have a secret which you persist in keeping concealed from me."

She almost writhed as she exclaimed,

"Gilbert, don't press me too hard, for I love you."

"If you did you would trust me," he said, quietly.

"I will. You shall see that I will. Not to-night, though—I dare not to-night. You'll know how much I love you when I tell you what will cost me so much—when you know what I risk. But I'd pay any price—I'd risk any thing to keep you from growing cold to me—I would; you know it. When you come to-morrow, how will you come? Not merely as a friend, surely?"

"She is a determined young person, and no

mistake," was his mental comment on this last inquiry of hers. But aloud he said,

"That depends entirely on the way you treat me."

"Ah! if it depends on my treatment of you, then you will have no excuse for coldness," she answered, triumphantly.

"I ought to have said that it depends entirely on how much confidence you see fit to do me the honor of reposing in me."

"Those are your terms, and you won't lower them? You'll stick to them, though you see they cut me to the heart?" she asked, bitterly.

"It is a very small thing, after all, for a man to ask of a woman who professes what you have professed for me," he said, quietly.

"The plain English of it is, that you want to hear all I can tell you about Clarice?" she said, in an angry, despairing tone.

"That is the plain English of it."

"Well, on your head be the responsibility of all the unhappiness that will follow your knowledge. Be warned in time; for the sake of every one you love, let Clarice and her past and future alone."

"Then we say good-bye to each other forever when we part to-night, Miss Vicary. I shall pursue my investigation of Clarice's case in another direction."

"Oh, Gilbert, don't, don't say such words!" she cried, intemperately. "When you come to-morrow, I'll tell you all you want to know; and—you won't turn against me, will you? I've done nothing that need prevent an honest man making me his wife."

She spoke ardently, eagerly, and his conscience stabbed him sharply.

"We shall each have to ask pardon of the other, I'm thinking," he said, mournfully; and she was about to question him closely about himself, when his sister called from the window,

"Gilbert, here's a telegram for you!"

They went in then, and he opened it under the fire of the keen observation of Emmeline Vicary; opened it, and read, in brief telegraphic language, that his wife was dead.





CHAPTER X.

EMMELINE'S APPEAL.

THERE in his hand were the tidings of the sudden and awfully unexpected death of the wife he had left only a few weeks ago in the full vigor of health and strength. And there close beside him stood the eagerly expectant woman who was so determined to marry him, and between whom and himself that one barrier "Bessie" had been removed in such a ghastly manner. He was stupefied by this shock, but still he had to go on acting a part.

To give forth the news—to let the appalling fact escape him now, would be to render all the plans and strategies of the last two weeks worse than idle and vain. It would be to turn them into poisoned weapons wherewith Miss Vicary would be justified in attacking him. It would be to ruin little Gerald's cause—if little Gerald had one—it would be to cut himself off forever from that further sight of, and speech with, Clarice which he had periled so much to gain. So, though his heart was really wrung, though his nerves were quivering, though the vanity and instability and worthlessness generally of all things earthly were very patent to him as the shadow of the shock fell upon him, he still overmastered his emotion, and retained his self-possession.

"What news have you, Gilbert?" his sister asked, anxiously, as he folded up the telegram and put it in his pocket; "what news has come to our lotus-eating village in such haste?"

"A business matter that I must talk to you about by-and-by," he said, and there was an unsteady quaver in his tones, a certain appearance of effort in his smiles, that made Emmeline Vicary regard him wistfully.

"The carriage for Miss Vicary" was mercifully announced just then, and Frank Stapylton was saying "good-night" in the low meaning tones in which men do say the commonplace words when they address them to women who

are beginning to be a little more than other women to them. "And you will come over and lunch at my place while your brother is with you?" were the first words of the farewell that fell on Gilbert Denham's ear.

"Yes; that is, if Gilbert—" Horatia was beginning, when her brother interrupted her.

"It mustn't be just yet, Stapylton. I have to run up to town to-morrow on"—(he had to gulp down a suffocating sob before he could say the word)—"business."

"Is your business so imperative that you must attend to it in such a hurry?" Emmeline asked, with what appeared to Mrs. Arthur Waldron to be most impertinent familiarity.

"It is my first duty in life to attend to it," he answered, with such startling force that Emmeline instantly had a dark vision of some "other designing woman with a prior claim on him"—a vision that roused all the slumbering tigress jealousy in her breast, and urged her to wrestle with his resolve.

"Can any thing come before the duty you owe me of coming to me to-morrow after what has passed to-night?" she muttered; and Gilbert Denham knew as he listened to her that he would be unable to break her chains with the same light ease with which he had forged them.

"My business will take me away by the earliest train I can catch to-morrow morning. I must defer my promised visit to you until my return—"

"You will be back soon, then?" she asked, eagerly. And when he had pledged himself to "be back soon," she remembered that her hostess was waiting to say "good-night" all this time, and that Mr. Stapylton must think her manner to Mr. Denham rather odd, on the whole.

The final farewells were exchanged present-

ly, and as soon as the brother and sister were alone, he took out the telegram and handed it to her, and she read it with a burst of womanly woe and sympathy that brought the tears into his eyes.

Their conversation was merely a stream of confused conjecture and speculation naturally. Bessie had been quite well when her husband heard from her two days ago, and now she was dead! These were the only two points on which they could speak with any thing like certainty. But still they sat up discussing the subject, rolling it about and viewing it miserably in every light until it was time for Gilbert to leave in the morning. And throughout their whole discourse there was no mention made by either of them of Emmeline Vicary.

As he took leave of his sister, he gave her one caution.

"This must not be mentioned here to any one—not even to Stapylton, Horry," he said, sadly.

"Oh! but, Gilbert, how can I help it?" she answered, in real dismay, as a thorough feminine difficulty presented itself. "The deeper mourning that I must put on will make people wonder and question. Do let us have done with mystery."

"Let them wonder and question," he answered, almost savagely. "Never mind the deeper mourning, child, don't make any change for my sake; above all things, don't let that horrible girl at Larpington House get hold of the fact of my being really a free man."

So Mrs. Arthur Waldron was left alone for a few days with another secret to keep—the secret of her sister-in-law's death. It was a harder one to preserve in perfect integrity than even the secret of poor Bessie's existence had been. A dozen times during the day she was on the point of explaining to her children or her servants why she felt depressed and looked sad. Some people—women especially are addicted to the degrading weakness—love to be steeped in mystery, and to involve an action or a circumstance in an air of guilty secrecy. But Horatia Waldron was not of this order. She loathed any thing like subterfuge, trickery, or concealment, as she loathed every form of lying, both active and passive. Her true, good, womanly intuition taught her that there was a foul taint in every kind of machination and mystery. And yet here she was, her soul burdened with a secret that made it ache, and she was told that she was bound to keep it for her child's sake.

The burden became a heavier one when later in the day Miss Vicary came down and

oppressed the young widow with her friendly sympathy about Gilbert's departure. The secret nearly rushed out in wrath more than once as courageous Emmy talked of him with a sort of affectionate freedom that nearly drove his sister wild, calling him "Gilbert" even, and assuming a sort of right in him, that Horry felt to be "indecent" under the real circumstances of the case. If glances could have slain, Miss Vicary would have been a dead woman the instant she finished the following sentence:

"His going away just now is worse for me than for you, dear, for—how shall I tell you?—I suppose you guess that we are going to be sisters?"

"What!" Horatia said, in a most uncomplimentary tone of utter amazement and disgust. Then as glances would not kill, and she was bound to keep this secret, she went on—

"Excuse my expression of unbounded astonishment; but Gilbert has never even hinted at such a possibility; as a rule, the announcement is made to a man's nearest relations by himself."

"But this is such an exceptional case," Miss Vicary pleaded in extenuation of her gallant defiance of all the established rules of maiden modesty. "This is such an exceptional case; he was coming up to speak to mamma to-day."

"He *couldn't* have promised that," Horatia interrupted, in real dismay. "Why, last night, he didn't know—"

She checked herself just in time. The statement that he didn't know last night till the telegram came that his wife was dead had nearly rushed out then. But the jerk with which she checked herself hurt her; jarred through all her soul, and shook it into stronger revolt than ever against this system of deception.

"He didn't know what?" Miss Vicary asked, suspiciously; "he didn't know the news contained in this telegram, I suppose you mean? What had that to do with it?"

"With what?" Horatia asked, feebly. She was not a proficient in the arts of lying and evasion. It frightened her to feel herself getting every moment more and more involved in a web of deception. For the first time she felt that the Larpington House secret might be purchased too dearly.

"I ask what had the news contained in Gilbert's telegram got to do with his speaking to my mamma about me?" Miss Vicary repeated, with a fixedness of purpose that

made Horatia quail. "And as to its being usual for a man to tell his nearest relations of such a contemplated change in his life, that's all nonsense, when he hasn't the opportunity, and the girl he is engaged to has. I won't ask you to say you're glad to hear what I have told you, for I can see you're not glad, Mrs. Arthur; but after all, if you only knew—"

"If I only knew what?" Horatia asked, wearily. "No, it would be absurd for me to feign gladness about what makes me feel wretched. I am tongue-tied, for I love my brother."

"And you don't think me worthy to be loved by your brother?"

"It's not that even—altogether," Mrs. Arthur Waldron rejoined; "I feel bewildered and unhappy, and I do wish you would refrain from speaking any more on this subject until my brother comes back."

"I have told mamma, and I have written to some of my friends, and the servants in the house know it already," Miss Vicary said, with dogged determination. "I am not ashamed of any thing I've done, and if you are ashamed for your brother—"

"I am, I am!" Horatia burst in intemperately, thinking of the falsehoods that must have been uttered and implied by Gilbert—thinking of them with deep humiliation for him, and bitter, loving sorrow that they should have been spoken by him on little Gerald's account. "Was there no other way to the solution of the Larpington House mystery than through this valley of degradation?" she asked herself. "Must we go on struggling in this dismal swamp of deception; and when we get out of it, shall we find ourselves on firm, fair ground again?" As she asked herself these questions, it was a small wonder that the truth escaped her in words that were not over-courteous, and that in response to Miss Vicary's remark, "And if you are ashamed for your brother," she should have sung out,

"I am, I am."

A flickering, fast-changing look of dislike gleamed over Miss Vicary's face for a moment. Then it changed in a wonderful way (for her's was not a mobile face) into a look of pity. "The sacrifice I make to your brother's curiosity and my love for him, will cost you more than it will me, my fine lady," she thought. But she guarded her gates of speech well, and only said,

"I'll be as honest as you are, Mrs. Arthur,

and tell you that I don't care a bit for your feelings on the subject; your brother and I love each other; you will be a very minor consideration to us both."

She spoke steadily and slowly as she threw the gauntlet down. And for the first time during the whole of their intercourse a tinge of respect crept into Horatia's feelings toward Miss Vicary. "She's brave and honest," the widow thought, "in the avowal of her love for Gilbert, in her utter regardlessness of all that is outside it; and he is alluring her with a lie, and I am abetting him, and oh, the hollow mockery of it all, the utter falsity of it all, the shameful meanness of it all!"

"Don't let us quarrel and say hard things to one another," she said aloud, almost piteously; "let us speak of something else, and not try to feel cruel to each other."

"Will you promise me not to try and influence your brother against me?" Miss Vicary asked, eagerly.

"Don't ask me to make such a promise," Horry pleaded; "it's too humiliating to us both."

"Has your brother said much to you, or any thing to you, about my sister Clarice?"

"Very little."

"And has that little interested you?"

"Not very much; I am not nearly as much interested in her as Gilbert is."

"Mrs. Arthur," Miss Vicary began, solemnly, "if you have any care for yourself or your children, check your brother's interest in her; crush his curiosity about her; induce him to leave her and her story alone."

"Why?" Horatia asked, simply.

"Why, oh! it's not easy to give you the reason why, but, believe me, I speak for other people's good, as well as my own. Clarice is very beautiful, and though she'll always be mad, she'll always be cunning too; she might get Gilbert to love her, and then Heaven help us all!"

She spoke the last words with such deep, pathetic melancholy, that Horatia shuddered.

"I feel inclined to pray that I may never hear your sister Clarice's name again at one moment, and the next I long to see her," she said.

"You shall see her if you like," Emmeline said, eagerly. "Come home with me, you shall see her to-day." And in her own mind Miss Vicary wondered, "Will womanly second-sight tell her any thing, I wonder?"



CHAPTER XI.

CLARICE'S APPEAL.

"**I**S she so lovely?" were the first words spoken by Mrs. Arthur Waldron, after a silence that had lasted from the gate of the Bridge House garden until they were well on their way up the Larpington avenue.

"Who?" Emmeline answered, absently. Her thoughts had strayed from Clarice during the silence. They had wandered whither the thoughts of a woman in love always will wander—namely, after the man she is in love with.

"Your sister Clarice; my brother spoke of her beauty as being something exceptional."

Miss Vicary reddened as she listened, and then grew pale with genuine jealous wrath as she replied,

"She has yellow hair and good eyes. I have seen many prettier women than Clarice."

"Is she at all like you?" Mrs. Arthur Waldron asked.

"My mother thinks she can see a family likeness between us, but I dare say you won't see it," the girl answered, slowly; "let me caution you, if you *do* see any likeness, not to mention it before Clarice; she thinks herself, mad as she is, infinitely superior to me. Mr. Carter will think I am as mad as she is, when he sees me taking another visitor to her today."

"Does she never go out?"

"Never," Miss Vicary answered, quickly. "Now, don't begin to think that she's kept shut up and deprived of fresh air and exercise out of wanton cruelty. Mr. Carter would take her out in the garden if she would go, but she prefers staying in 'unless she is let go by herself,' she says. Of course we can't allow a mad woman to go roaming about as she pleases, so she has to pay the penalty of her obstinacy, and remain in the house."

"Poor Clarice! it seems to me it would be a mercy, indeed, if she died," Horatia said, pityingly.

"It would be a greater mercy than you think for, and to more people than you think of," Miss Vicary said, gloomingly. And by this time they were in the picture-gallery, and fast approaching Clarice's room.

As on the occasion of her having introduced Gilbert Denham to the mysterious chamber, Emmeline rang the bell of the anteroom. But this time it was opened by the nurse. It seemed to be almost a relief to Emmeline to hear that Mr. Carter had gone out.

"Is she drawing or reading, nurse?" Miss Vicary asked.

"Neither, miss; she's asleep, poor soul," the woman answered, sympathetically. And then she led the way into the room where the sick girl was lying stretched upon a couch, in a deep, pleasant sleep, apparently, for a bright smile kept on playing over her perfect lips.

The two ladies stood looking at her for a few moments, then Horatia spoke.

"She's lovelier than Gilbert's description led me to believe she was, even. In all my dreams of fair women, I never dreamed of any thing so fair as this one."

"Really; well, I can't say I admire yellow-haired women so much myself; they're generally insipid-looking, I think; and for all their mild milk-and-water looks, they've nearly always horrible tempers. It was Clarice's ungovernable passion, when she had her trouble, that broke her mind down."

"Her trouble was a love-trouble, of course?" Horatia inquired.

"Yes; the man she loved died." Miss Vicary said the last words with a gulp that sounded like a sob. "Other people have lost lovers in the same way, but she chose to think hers the hardest case in the world."

"Poor thing! poor girl!" Mrs. Arthur muttered, bending down and touching the tiny white hand that was resting on the back of the sofa. And at the touch, light as it was, Clarice woke, opened her eyes, and with wonderful composure instantly raised herself into a sitting position.

"You here again," she began, her violet eyes flashing angrily on Emmeline. "Why have you come, and who is—"

She checked herself suddenly, and rose up with all the anger gone from her eyes, and with a look of passionate appeal reigning in its stead.

"You'll know me, you'll know me," she began, piteously; "you'll know my face as I know yours, and you'll tell every one who I am, and what the name that I have forgotten is. You'll know me, won't you? You'll free me, won't you? You'll turn these wretches out, and tell me where I am and who I am, won't you?"

She had caught Horatia's hands in her own slight, nervous ones; she had drawn nearer and nearer as she made her wild appeal, and now as she brought it to a conclusion, she flung her arms round Mrs. Arthur's neck, and pressed her soft, white cheek against the young widow's.

"Poor darling, you are a stranger to me," Horatia said, gently; and as she said it Miss Vicary heaved a sigh of obvious relief, and the mad girl drew back disappointed.

"Yet I know your face as well as I do my own," she said, dejectedly, "only I can't put a name to it; if I could, I could remember my own name, for it's the same, I know."

"You see now what delusions she labors under," Miss Vicary said, contemptuously. "Her name the same as yours, indeed! poor Clarice!"

As she spoke, Miss Vicary turned away with an irritating laugh, and walked away to the window, where she let herself drift into thoughts of Gilbert. As she stood thus absorbed, Clarice, with the quick cunning of her state, picked up a little water-color study she had made of her own face, and put it into Horatia's hand, and Horatia, with a sudden and uncontrollable impulse, hid it away in her muff. The incident scarcely occupied a second, and at the end of it Clarice turned away, singing. Into her darkened mind this gleam of light had come—she had succeeded in establishing intercourse with the outer world unknown to her jailers.

By-and-by, Emmeline tore her thoughts away from Gilbert, and turned them once again toward Gilbert's sister.

"You have seen enough of the enchanted princess, I suppose, haven't you? Come down and see mamma now; and look here, please don't mention the visit you have paid to this white elephant of ours to mamma, or to Mr. Carter; I oughtn't to have brought you, only I wanted to please you, because you are Gilbert's sister."

"I won't mention it either to your mamma or to Mr. Carter," Horatia promised. Then she let herself be hurried away, for she was impatient to study the sketch of the lovely face in solitude.

Clarice had relapsed into her normal state of indifference; but still it seemed to Horatia that the beautiful violet eyes looked steadily and wistfully into her own as she said good-bye, and unquestionably Clarice's hand gave hers a most significant clasp.

"Good-bye, we shall meet again, Clarice," Mrs. Arthur Waldron said, gently, and Clarice replied,

"We shall, and you'll not call me Clarice then, for you'll know me, you'll know me, you'll know me!"

These last words of Clarice's were ringing in her ears some hours afterward, when she was sitting at home, before a bright fire, brooding over the events of the last two days. Bessie's death had been a shock to her; but her intercourse with that kindest of creatures had been very limited during the last few years; and so the announcement of her death, though it had been a shock, had not been such a shock as Clarice's urgent, passionate appeal had been this morning.

She sat there turning the subject over and over in her mind, looking at it from every point of view with which she was acquainted, and finding it grow more and more perplexing the more she thought about it.

"I could read in her eyes that she was speaking the truth when she said she knew my face," Horatia thought, "and yet I never saw her, or any one half as lovely as she is, before in my life; who can she be? I would give so much to find out, for, as Gilbert feels, she is not a Vicary."

Poor Horatia! She little knew what a heavy price she would be called upon to pay for the knowledge she now so ardently and honestly desired. And so her eyes were sweeter and softer than he had ever seen them before, full of genuine womanly compassion and sympathy, when Frank Stapylton came in to call upon her.

They sat in the gray winter twilight for

some time, talking of Gilbert, and hoping that the business which had wrenched him away so suddenly would soon permit him to return. And through all the discussion, and the speculations to which it gave rise in Mr. Stapylton's sympathetic mind, Horatia was loyal to her brother's wishes, and kept the secret of Bessie's death. But the necessity for being on guard grew irksome to her, and she was glad to change the subject.

She did it by speaking of the Larpington House people, and of the suspiciously cautious way in which they concealed Clarice from the observation of the neighborhood. "Miss Vicary has broken through her rule of reserve, as far as I am concerned, to-day," she explained; "she wishes to please me and to

buy my neutrality about my brother; so she took me up there and let me see her sister, and her sister is—but I'll show you."

She rose up and rang for lights, and when they came she took up the slight water-color sketch in which Clarice had done something like feeble justice to her own rare loveliness.

"Clarice managed to put this in my hand as a memento," Horatia said, holding it out to Frank Stapylton. "It is like her, only paint can't give the sheen of her golden hair, or the shimmer of her glorious eyes."

He took it, looked at it for a moment, then rose like a man to meet the blow the revelation was to him.

"This is the girl I told you of; the girl I proposed to at Brighton," he said.





CHAPTER XII.

THE MARTYRDOM OF HORATIA WALDRON.

FOR a few moments—and the moments were full of such pain and astonishment that in living through them she grew many hours older—Horatia Waldron stood mute and motionless before the man whose mind had traveled back to the past, and whose heart was beating at the sight even of the poor semblance of his lost love.

It cut her to the quick to see that “still the memory rankled,” the memory of that woman whom he had loved in his youth, and who had preferred another man to him. Fidelity is a delightful quality in the eyes of a woman where it is exhibited toward herself. When it is exhibited toward another, she is apt to be blind to the full beauty and excellence of it.

“It can only be a most astonishing likeness, after all,” he said, presently, looking scrutinizingly at the sketch of the fair face that had moved him so strongly. “It can only be one of those marvelous accidental resemblances that one does hear of occasionally; and yet—it’s painfully like Cecil Rashleigh, don’t you know?”

“No, I don’t know—how should I know?” Horatia said, with the fatally visible petulance that is born of jealousy. The current phrase had not irritated when falling from Frank Stapylton’s lips previously. But now, when he foolishly assumed that she possessed a knowledge of a woman she had never seen, she felt irritated, “justly irritated,” she told herself.

“No, to be sure, how should you?” he said, thoughtfully. “And now I must be mistaken, of course; but it was a shock to me at first to find that Miss Vicary’s mad sister is so uncommonly like the girl I was in love with once. When I took this up and caught the first glimpse of her face, I felt just the same thrill I did years ago when I first saw her, and fell

in love with her on the spot. I was awfully cut, to be sure.”

Horatia remained motionless, as motionless as she could—that is to say, a certain trembling of her nervous lips, a certain air of light flutter that can not be defined, would have betrayed her agitation and its cause to him, if all attention had not been concentrated on the subject of the wonderful resemblance he had discovered between the mad Miss Vicary and his old love.

It was pitifully hard on Horatia Waldron. Only the night before he had been worrying her in words, and with a manner that was even warmer than his words. He had been showing her that she held the highest place in his estimation, the first claim in his interest, the position of honor in his heart. And now he was speaking openly of another woman in terms of love and admiration, and avowing, without hesitation, that he felt thrilled at the sight even of an accidental likeness to that other one. It was pitifully hard on Mrs. Arthur Waldron; it wronged her pride as well as her heart. And she could not take refuge from the pain of endurance by a course of action that is a natural and usual one with proud and passionately loving women. She could not give him his opportunity with the girl who resembled the one he still preferred to herself. She could not bring him nearer to Clarice, and defy him and every one else to suspect the agony she endured, by aiding him to win the girl, a sight of whom thrilled him. All this she would have done, with all the form and skill, and tact and sympathy with which she was endowed, though she would have done it at the cost of such anguish to herself as love and jealousy only have the power of inflicting. But her hands were tied; she could do none of these things, for Clarice was mad; and

though she would have been ready to sacrifice herself, she was not prepared to sacrifice him to such an appalling fate.

At last she recovered her composure sufficiently to enable her to act the bitter part which women are often compelled to play.

"I am so glad to be able to tell you honestly, that I think there may be no mistake at all on your side," she began, as warmly and sweetly as if every word she was talking were not deepening the pain in her heart. "My brother has no faith at all in her being Mrs. Waldron's daughter; and from what I saw of her to-day—of her grace and beauty and refinement, I am quite ready to indorse my brother's opinion; she may be the—lady you knew once."

He shook his head incredulously.

"No, no, it's utterly impossible that Cecil Rashleigh can have fallen into their power in any way," he said. And then, after a brief pause, he added, "I should like to get a sight of her very much, though I'm positive she isn't Cecil; but the likeness is so startling, I should like to see her."

"You shall, if it can be managed in any way," Horatia said, with all the cordial sympathy of manner which she had at command. "Listen to me, Mr. Stapylton, I dare not raise your hopes too high—it would be so terrible to have to dash them down again; but if, when you have seen her, you find her to be the one we hope she may be, bear this in mind—that Gilbert is sure, under different treatment, her mind would be quite restored."

Poor, wretched, honorable impostor that she was! She succeeded perfectly in making him believe that all her interest was engaged on the side of the girl who resembled Cecil. He had no more idea than men usually have in such cases, that Horatia was capable of being horribly cruel to herself, for the sake of doing him what he thought a kindness. She seemed to be doing it all in an effortless manner, and so in this new excitement he forgot his own former warm feelings for her, and assumed easily that her interest in him was of that true sisterly order which it is so creditable "for a fellow to gain from a nice woman." And Horatia saw that he took this view of the case, and went on acting her part more perfectly than ever.

"I almost feel as if the dream of your youth would be realized," she said, with the fine fervor women can portray about the heart affairs of another, when their own hearts are bleeding to death sometimes.

"Well, it won't be the 'dream of my youth,' whatever this comes to, you see; the practical, all-conquering girl I was so awfully fond of, she won't be the same, don't you know?—she's been married, and—"

"Mad," Horatia said, impulsively, letting jealous wrath have all its own way for a moment. Then again she constrained herself strongly, to go on making him believe that all this was just as she would have it.

"But the two evils are things of the past, Mr. Stapleton; for all we know she may never have been married at all; and as for the madness, that exists chiefly in the imagination of Mrs. Waldron and Miss Vicary, I am inclined to think. Let me tell you how she looked when she was speaking to me this morning. I am such a poor word-painter that I shall not do her justice, but I will do my best to make you understand how she interested and fascinated me, and you know how difficult I am about women."

Then she did "do her best," believing that she would be guilty of some sort of baseness and meanness if she did not depict this unconscious rival of hers in the most glowing colors she could find to use. And she did her best so cleverly that Frank Stapylton believed she felt an actual pleasure in doing it, and rewarded her efforts on his behalf by being touched to absolute emotion by the vision she conjured up of the pleading, helpless, lovely prisoner of Larpington House.

In blithe ignorance of the fact of the pain Horatia was enduring in listening to these retrospections, he adorned the subject of Cecil Rashleigh with the most ornate speculations. What he might do, and she might do, if she proved to be the she of his boyhood's romance, was a fruitful theme. And almost equally productive of happy, hopeful, amiable wonderment, was the theme of what other people would say and think and feel.

"At any rate, through it all I shall be sure to have your sympathy, whichever way the wind blows," he said, heartily; and Horatia smiled and told him yes, whatever came he might be sure of her being glad if he was glad, and grieved for him if genuine cause of grief arose.

And she brought herself to say all this with unfaltering lips. It was the first bit of self-abrogation which she had to practice with regard to him, as she performed her task as only a woman can who loves a man too well to pain him by letting him see how he is paining her.

But the weary conviction that this was only the beginning of the end—that she would in fact have to go on seeming the thing she was not—glad, namely, for that which would be probably a very doubtful blessing to him, and the very reverse of a blessing to her—grew upon and weakened her. Weakened her so, that she was at the very worst soon that a woman can be before the man she pines to please. Weary and wan-looking, and too wistful about him altogether to have a particle of the power of witching him left in her.

And he was so bitterly oblivious of her—of what had gone before during his brief intercourse with her—of every thing, in short, that did not bear upon his own case in connection with the love he had lost, and the possibilities concerning the lady of Larpington House. So, being thus utterly oblivious, he staid on, and raked over the ashes of the past, and disinterested every incident relating to those halcyon days of youth and love and hope in which he had known Cecil Rashleigh.

“I shall leave the matter entirely in your hands at first,” he said at length, when he had exhausted his reminiscences of Cecil, and poor Horatia’s tired eyes were rapidly losing the power of expressing that sparkling interest which she wished him to believe she felt in the affair. “I shall leave the matter entirely in your hands at first; you manage to let me have a sight of the girl herself, and after that I’ll undertake to clear up any mystery there may be.” Then he added something about Horatia being the sweetest fellow-laborer a man could have in any work, and went away, finally, beaming with excited self-satisfaction.

On the face of it, his conduct may appear thoughtless and selfish to those who are not given to scanning human actions closely, and analyzing human motives thoroughly. But the fact is that he was only selfish and thoughtless to the same degree that the noblest-natured as well as the meanest-natured men are when the master-passion seizes them. Only the other day he had been charmed, fasci-

nated, interested by Mrs. Arthur Waldron to the point of wishing to make her fall in love with him, and become exclusively his own property, in which no other man should have the right to take pride and pleasure. But he had not been interested by her yet to the point of falling in love with her himself. Accordingly, he almost unconsciously slipped off his former hopes and sensations about her, as easily as he would have slipped off a cloak, when the chord was struck of a sentiment that had been stronger in the past, than was his sentiment for her in the present. It was all natural and right and pardonable enough—above all, it was essentially human, and Horatia Waldron acknowledged that it was all these things. Nevertheless it was uncommonly hard to bear.

In almost a similar way to this these people passed the next few days, meeting often, meeting always in healthy, open, undisguised friendship, and still the meetings were full of pleasure unalloyed to the man who loved to talk of Cecil, and liked to have clever and sympathetic Mrs. Arthur Waldron for a listener. Full of unalloyed pleasure to him, and full of such pain to her as can only be appreciated by a woman who has been gnawed by jealousy, and at the same time torn to tatters by the struggles of a self-respect that will not permit the jealousy to manifest itself.

Sometimes Horatia felt wildly anxious to accelerate matters, as one about whose heart the dagger’s point was playing might feel anxious to drive it home to the hilt. If she could have fought for and won his bride for him on these occasions she would have done it, and additionally would have been capable of mounting the carriage-box and driving the happy pair at full gallop to the nearest church. There would have been absolute relief to her in this heart-suicidal course of action. But to sit and be the recipient of Frank’s love-rhapsodies about another woman! Well, she won her martyr’s crown nobly; that is all that can be said.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE MESSAGE.

MEANWHILE Gilbert Denham buried the wife whose life he had counted on as being of such value to him when the time was ripe for Miss Vicary to demand her pound of flesh, and then suffered himself to be dragged back to Larpington by the irresistible power of repulsion. During his absence he found that he had been very securely assigned by rumor to Miss Vicary. Her mother had given Mrs. Arthur Waldron's unwilling hand an emphatic squeeze when they met on the Sunday previously, in coming out of church. "And that woman actually had the audacity to add that she heartily and cordially approved of the arrangements, and that, when you married her daughter, she would retire and leave you in possession of Larpington House. As if your interest was to be bought away from my boy in that way; or as if I was to be won to sink his rights because it may be that my own brother will enjoy them."

Horatia panted out her protestation eagerly, and Gilbert replied to it in a way that re-assured her.

"Rely upon it, that no power on earth—or under it either, for that matter—shall ever induce me to marry Miss Vicary," he said, in a tone of gloomy desperation; "but there will be some sharp and severe passages before I gain my point and get free from her."

"You mean before you gain the secret, whatever it may be, about Clarice?"

"Yes; the secret, whatever it may be, about Clarice is the greatest interest I have on earth—now."

The "now" was an after-thought added by the poor young widower, as a respectful tribute to the memory of his deceased wife.

"Well, Gilbert," his sister began, hesitatingly, with a woman's natural unwillingness to point out to another that the love she had been

accredited with gaining was in reality given to somebody else. "Well, Gilbert, since you went away something very extraordinary has happened;" and then she went on to tell him of her visit to Clarice, of the water-color sketch, and all its consequences.

And as she told him she saw that another complication would arise. For she saw her brother's face darken and flush ominously, and she noticed that his voice had a strange, harsh ring in it, as he said,

"I don't want any aid from Stapylton;" and there was about him that air of gruff rejection of any thing that might be construed into a service or favor, from a man who might develop into a rival, which is so unmistakable. "He is going to love her, too, and be jealous of Frank," the poor young widow thought; and then her jealousy for her son—for the son who might live to be a talented and distinguished man, and so glorify her (his mother) in a way that no new lover could ever do—entered in, and for the time cast out the jealousy of the mysterious Cecil, with whom Frank Stapylton fancied himself in love.

That her boy might be worsted in this struggle—that her little Gerald's interests might be swamped in this general flood of feeling which seemed to be setting in—was a possibility that strung her up to the point of enduring any thing. She was very ready to sacrifice herself. A woman who is worth any thing is always ready to do that; but she was not ready to sacrifice her child—her boy—the son of whom she was so proud in his babyhood, that to live to be his mother in his manhood was her most fervent prayer.

Under the influence of this feeling, she spoke to her brother with all the convincing warmth that characterizes a woman who is in loving earnest.

"But, Gilbert, why not take his aid, if he can give you any! Take his aid in clearing away the mists which are between my boy and his own, and give him your help in winning this woman to be his wife; help each other. Do! do! for my sake."

And Gilbert looked at her, pulling his mustache the while, in vague endeavor to comprehend her, and didn't understand her in the least, and was indeed rather further from her real meaning when the conversation ended than he had been at the beginning of it.

"Of course, if you've so set on his marrying this girl, whether he wants to do so or not, you'll carry your point by the force of sheer pertinacity; you quietly impulsive women are apt to get your way. But I thought that the wind was blowing quite another way; really, Horry, I thought the other night—"

"Oh! don't tell me what you thought the other night," she interrupted. "You were mistaken; and I ought to be very thankful that I have not been led into temptation, and at the same time I ought to bless this vision of Cecil Rashleigh's face, for through it we may find out something about the way that woman got hold of my boy's property."

"I don't see that you ought to be very thankful for either circumstance, Horry," her brother said, laughing; "and I'm sure you are not either; you're trying to delude yourself, my dear girl; I shall think Stapylton a sentimental fool if he falls off from his preference for you; there's something maudlin about a fellow getting spooney on an idea in this way that I don't like. I believe you, in the zeal of your desire to sacrifice yourself, have been talking him into it."

Mrs. Arthur Waldron shook her head, and answered with just a tinge of jealous bitterness in her tone.

"No, no; there was no need for me to do that, I assure you, Gilbert; it was genuine emotion—the emotion produced by genuine love which he betrayed on seeing that poor faint sketch of a face that I feel to be fair enough to chain any man's constancy for life. I wish you wouldn't laugh doubtfully in that way. I want you to believe that Frank Stapylton will have my hearty aid and warmest wishes."

"By Jove, then, he won't have mine," Gilbert Denham cried, hastily; and fellow-feeling taught his sister truly that he, too, was being stung much in the same way that she herself was. The fair face had evidently made an indelible impression on him.

For a few moments, Horatia Waldron allowed hope to thrill her heart as the thought flashed into her mind that Gilbert would attempt to rival Frank Stapylton. Why should not her handsome, clever brother rival him successfully! There was balm in the thought. Then, with the absurd partiality of a woman in love, she let the hope fade away, as she said to herself,

"But what chance would Gilbert stand against Frank? She refused him in his youth, because she was bound to some one else; but what free woman could resist him now? Well, I have my children."

"I have my children." The cry wells up from many a bleeding heart, and the reflection saves many a woman from utter despair. "I have my children!" It is a merciful dispensation that the majority do not think at the same time: "But they will soon grow away from finding their mother their nearest, dearest interest; they will each and all of them learn to love some stranger better than me; and it is right that it should be so; right! but, Heaven, how hard!"

Happily for Horatia, no thought of the husband and wife of the future who would come and take her children from her disturbed her peace now. She had them still—entirely, indisputably; and having them, she told herself she could see Frank Stapylton lapse from her without a sigh.

"I suppose you have that water-color sketch you were speaking of? I should like to have a look at it," Gilbert said, in a tone of transparently assumed carelessness, presently.

"No, I haven't, Gilbert, I lent it to Mr. Stapylton;" and then Horatia went on heroically to describe how Mr. Stapylton had pleaded ardently for the poor, weak reflection of the beauty he adored.

"I consider it mere maudlin sentimentality—a fellow going on in that way," Gilbert said, angrily; "parading his puny constancy to a woman who refused him once as if it was something to be proud of; Stapylton hasn't half the stuff in him that I thought he had."

"It's because he is showing that he has such good faithful stuff in him that you're annoyed, Gilbert," she said, warmly. Horatia Waldron suffered terribly in her own heart on account of that same faithfulness of Frank's. But she would not hear him censured for it without uttering her protest.

But she saw how it was with painful perspicuity. Both these men—the two dearest to her on earth—had gone over to the side of the

unconscious woman whom ordinarily just Horatia Waldron had come to regard as her enemy; and she felt piteously pained, and outraged, and helpless.

The avenger in the person of Emmeline Vicary was upon Gilbert Denham before he had recovered the blow of hearing that Frank Stapylton was going to put in a prior claim to the beauty whose identity was shrouded in mystery. Miss Vicary came down in all her glory upon the inhabitants of the Bridge House; came down with a chariot and horses, and a determined-looking mother, and raiment of price upon her fine, expansive person. And she called Gilbert "Gilbert," in the tones of an owner, and generally by means of her manner made both Gilbert and his sister hate her more than they had done hitherto.

In explanation of a certain abstraction of mind and indifference of manner, which he could not help himself from exhibiting, and which Miss Vicary, with ponderous warmth, promptly resented, Gilbert suffered the statement to escape him that he had just lost by death the dearest friend he had in the world. And forthwith Emmeline perplexed him with inquiries.

"Tell me about him, Gilbert," she said, laying a suspicious emphasis on the personal pronoun; "you will find that I shall never be jealous of your men friends occupying a warm place in your regard; I think it's mean of a woman to be that, don't you?"

"I find that women are capable of any amount of meanness," he answered, writhing. In the present distorted state of his judgment, he almost believed that there was a touch of meanness in the fact of that fair-faced beauty up at Larpington House having existed previously for any other man. And he was almost inclined to accuse poor Horatia of meanness in being ready to aid and abet that other man to win her (the fair-faced beauty). He was altogether out of gear, in fact; and so Miss Vicary had him very much at her tender mercy.

"You will acknowledge that I have not shown any thing like meanness in the management of our affairs," she said, deprecatingly, "in spite of your leaving me so abruptly, after all, you know. I was very brave, for I told mamma and your sister about it myself. Mamma was all that was kind, but (you mustn't be angry with me for telling you the truth now and at all times, Gilbert) your sister showed very ill feeling about it."

She had got him out in the most secluded

part of Horatia's garden as she made this communication, and she was leaning weightily on his arm in the ponderously affectionate way in which some young women do delight in making manifest their right supreme to the situation. He could bear many things, when the many things were merely means toward an end that was dear to him. But he could not bear censure of his sister from Emmeline Vicary.

"My sister was naturally shocked and surprised at what you said to her," he said, coldly.

"Why 'naturally?'" Miss Vicary asked, angrily. "There is nothing so very out of the way in your thinking me good enough to be your wife; your marriage with me won't lower you, or her either, and it strikes me that's all she cares for—"

"Don't speak of marriage, I've just left a death-bed," Gilbert interrupted, with an amount of emotion that under the circumstances must have been perplexing and offensive to the lady by his side. However, she subdued any evidence of anger which she might have been tempted to show, and said, almost humbly, "I hope you won't be annoyed at one other thing I've done during your absence; I have taken Mrs. Arthur to see Clarice?"

"No, I'm not annoyed at it," he said; and yet he was unaccountably annoyed about it the whole time. "Perhaps," he went on, "it would have been well to have consulted me first; my sister is enthusiastic, and enthusiasm is very penetrating; if there is any thing to be discovered about Clarice which you wish to keep concealed, you have done an unwise thing."

"I shall make you the judge of whether it will be well for us to conceal it or not, very soon," she said, in a whisper. "I'll trust you entirely—as I love you; you shall know Clarice's story."

He felt that an appalling responsibility of some unknown kind would be cast upon him as soon as he did know it. Nevertheless he panted to hear all she had to tell him.

"The sooner the better for us all," he said quietly, and Emmeline nerved herself to the task, and would have told him "all" there was to tell, if her mother and his sister had not come to the window calling them just then.

"Mr. Stapylton is here, and Mrs. Waldron wishes us all to go up and have luncheon with her," Mrs. Arthur Waldron said to her brother as he approached her, "and I should like to go, if you will, Gilbert." She went on driving the dagger deeper into her heart as she thought of how Frank would not only "thrill," but tell

her of his thrills when he found himself under the same roof with the woman he loved.

And Gilbert acquiesced in the plan, for any thing was better than delay, and so, as soon as it was settled, Miss Vicary proposed that the carriage should be sent home, and that the whole party should walk up together.

So they went through the village, a peaceful procession apparently, full of all manner of kindly feeling and good-will toward one another. And so many of their fellow-creatures as observed them thought what an auspicious spectacle it was, and how well it augured for the future prosperity of the place that the two branches of the family should be proclaiming in this way their intention of dwelling in peace and amity together.

The luncheon was a lengthy ceremony at Larpington House always, but to day it seemed hideous in its extreme length to the two men who were anxious to see it come to an end, and to be on their way to fresh discoveries. They grew silent, sad, utterly uninteresting in their bored impatience, and it was a relief even to unconscious Mrs. Waldron when it came to an end, and Emmeline moved an adjournment to the picture-gallery. "For there, without making ourselves conspicuous, we can talk apart," she whispered to Gilbert Denham. And he, knowing that the picture-gallery opened into Clarice's room, said "Yes" to her proposition, gladly.

They sauntered up and down for a time looking at the dead-and-gone Waldrons, and talking of the extreme beauty which had characterized the last two representatives of the race; and Frank Stapylton made himself Mrs. Arthur Waldron's close escort during the sauntering, and whispered to her perpetually, for did she not know his secret, and sympathize with it? Gilbert Denham and Emmeline meantime strolling apart, he anxious beyond the bounds of mere common anxiety for the moment to arrive which should put him in possession of Clarice's story; she striving with all her power to string herself up to the task of telling it.

Presently the mistress of the house, seeing that the quartette had arranged itself so happily, and feeling that as the odd one she was *de trop*, left them, and went back to one of the back saloons wherein she loved to sit, while her imagination peopled it with an aristocratic crowd whom she had had the power of calling together.

So the four were left alone, without her guarding presence, within a few yards of the

secret which three of them thirsted to find out. Wildly, impatiently, without an end or aim, Horatia Waldron moved about the gallery, and spoke as coherently as she could of the things which she scarcely saw. Tried to talk Art, poor thing! with her heart aching about Nature, and failed; and still concealed her failure from the man who caused her to make it.

That he was not worth one of these pangs which she suffered on his account was a saving consideration which never came to her aid once during these dark days. It never does until a woman has endured all the anguish, and then it comes with overwhelming force, and adds terribly to her mortification. On the whole, better the agony of loving than the discovery that the one loved is not worth the price of pain one has paid for him.

But Horatia Waldron had not made this discovery yet. Most probably she was one of the women who never do make it, but who go on to the end making gods of mere idols of some kind of poor composition. If she is one of these women, all I can say is that her's will be the happier fate. The feeling of having been deceived by one's own vain imaginings is about as painful a one as a woman can be called upon to live through.

Frank Stapylton was one of the men whom women truthfully enough speak of as delightful, and men warmly mention as a "very good fellow." Nevertheless he was not that despicable thing, "a general favorite." Far be it from me to wish to depreciate the man Horatia Waldron honored with her regard. He was not a general favorite, but he was very well liked, with very good reason, by the great majority. Since the fading away of his first love-dream, he had taken life very gayly. His real inner cry had been—

"Then let me live a long romance,
And learn to trifle well,
And write my motto '*Vive la danse!*'
And *Vive la bagatelle!*"

But Horatia Waldron had fetched him down from this airy, unfeeling sphere. Fetched him down only that he might fall in love with another woman.

Into the midst of their quiet in this picture-gallery, this latter reflection would intrude and disquiet her. She knew all the time that he was waiting, longing, yearning for a sound and a sight of that other woman as ardently as he was shrinking from it. And so presently she said, with the impassioned fervor of despairing love and defiant jealousy,

"If 'Will' had any thing to do with the mat-

ter I'd bring Clarice into our midst this moment. It is hard on us all—it is more than cruel to you, that circumstances should keep her boxed up so close to us when a sight of her might—”

Into the midst of her speech came a strain, and the cry of the recognition of it. Out from

the barred and bolted chamber in which Clarice was imprisoned there rang the words of Blumenthal's "Message"—the first words of the witching melody, sung in a high tremulous soprano, and, in response to it, Frank Stapylton stammered out,

"It is Cecil herself."

CHAPTER XIV.

"IN MY LADY'S CHAMBER."

HE did not soften or subdue his voice, he gave out his conviction that it was "Cecil herself," gladly, loudly, gloriously, as a man should give out any conviction he may hold about the woman he loves.

"Let us go in at once," he said, eagerly, to Horatia Waldron, turning to her for sure and ready sympathy and hearty acquiescence, and utterly ignoring Miss Vicary's presence and possible power. And his hand was on the handle of the door of Clarice's prison in a moment, and the flush of love and anticipation was on his face, and Mrs. Arthur Waldron felt that the hour had come for another to "shine her down" altogether, as far as he was concerned, when suddenly Miss Vicary interposed.

Coldly, mockingly, tauntingly, it almost seemed to them all, Emmeline spoke.

"Really, Mr. Stapylton, it seems to me that weakness is infectious; that is the only way I can account for your taking such an unpardonable liberty as to attempt to enter that room."

"But I tell you that I know her, that I will see her!" he cried, excitedly; and then, lashed to fury by the fear that the secret she was going to surrender for love, to barter for love, would be discovered, and so make her surrender of no avail, she ran to the head of the staircase and called loudly for "Mr. Carter."

"Why on earth were you so impetuous, so ridiculously fast about it," Gilbert Denham said, complainingly. "How could it have entered your mind for one moment that the door would be unlocked? You have done away with all chance of seeing her now."

And indeed it seemed as if Frank Stapylton had damaged an excellent cause when

Mr. Carter appeared, in answer to Emmeline's loud appeals, and with surly determination refused to "permit his patient to be made the object of idle curiosity."

It was in vain that Frank, with perfect ingenuousness and utter want of wisdom, protested with fervor that his curiosity was the very reverse of idle, that he had recognized the voice of the friend who was the dearest in the world to him, and that one glance at her face would enable him to proclaim whether or not a foul fraud had been perpetrated. It was all in vain. Mr. Carter denied the possibility of the suspected identity, and declared that he was endowed with power to protect his patient from intrusion by the authority of her mother. And Emmeline Vicary backed him up in his decision, in defiant disregard of all the reminding, appealing glances Gilbert Denham leveled at her.

"You must be as mad as my patient to have been guilty of such an error of judgment—such a breach of good taste in the house of a friend and neighbor," Mr. Carter presently muttered to the bewildered, enthusiastic, excited man, who was powerless to do more than repeat his firm and unalterable conviction that it was "Cecil herself" whose voice he had heard.

It was humiliating, mortifying, disappointing to a degree to them all, to have to leave the mystery just as they thought they were on the brink of elucidating it. It was doubly hard on Frank, who had a decent feeling of interest in the affair, as it concerned Mrs. Arthur Waldron's child, and a desperate one as it concerned Cecil Rashleigh. And it was almost equally hard on Horatia, who had so many interests at stake in the matter.

They left the house very soon, parting with

Mrs. Waldron and Miss Vicary with marked coolness, and, on Frank Stapylton's part, with undisguised suspicion. "You have stopped me from seeing her this time," he said, hotly, to Miss Vicary, "but your triumph will be a very brief one, I can assure you."

And in answer to this last indiscretion, Miss Vicary said, "I defy you ever to see my sister."

Gilbert's farewell speech was far less threatening to listen to at the time, but in thinking it over afterward both the mother and daughter came to the conclusion that it was far more ominous.

"Every secret unfolds itself in time; every thing comes to the man who can wait; I can wait, you will find."

"He may wait forever, and it shall never come to him, shall it, Emmy?" Mrs. Waldron began, violently. "Say you'll never let him wheedle you out of it, Emmy? All that I have done, I have done for you, my child."

"Nonsense, mother; it has been for yourself quite as much as for me; and why shouldn't it be for yourself? It is natural and human to do as much for one's self as for one's children, and I never should try to deny any thing that is natural and human."

"Ah! you're not a mother, and can't understand a mother's feelings," Mrs. Waldron resumed, plaintively. "Do you think I would have planned, and toiled, and schemed as I have for myself alone?"

"Yes," Emmeline answered promptly, "why shouldn't you? you're as fond of fine living and fine clothes as I am, and why shouldn't you be? You wouldn't like to go back to what you were before I took service with her, any more than I should like it."

"It's what I shall have to do and you will have to do if you let him wheedle you out of the truth."

"If he ever does wheedle the truth out of me, it will be his interest as much as ours to hold his tongue. The truth won't benefit his sister; if it would, he'd sacrifice me, I believe; but it won't, and so his honorable scruples may be lulled to rest, I dare say," Emmy replied, half contemptuously, for she was feeling bitter against Gilbert for the coldness he had shown to her this morning; and in her bitterness she let the truth, which is the most mortifying of all for a woman to realize, escape her—namely, the conviction that she was, after all, only a secondary consideration to the man she loved.

But suggestive as this conversation would

have been to any one of the disappointed trio, their conversation was still more pregnant with meaning as they sat until the twilight fell, in the drawing-room of the Bridge House discussing ways and means and possibilities. Gilbert, the practical, declared his intention of getting a detective down from London, while Stapylton, the ardent, made life pleasant for Mrs. Arthur Waldron by avowing that he did not need the services of a detective, and would infinitely prefer breaking Cecil's prison bars himself and carrying her off to some place where Love, aided by Science, should restore reason.

His own assertion, unpremeditated and unthought of as it was, worked in his mind, and caused him to devise, and plot, and plan as he had never done in his life before. But, after all, plotting and planning were of no avail. The scheme he eventually carried out flashed into his mind in an instant, as he rode away from the Bridge House that night.

There were but few lights to be seen in the windows of Larpington House. It looked unusually dull, in fact, for the mistress of the mansion and her daughter, exhausted by the fear and excitement of the day, had gone to bed early; so the usual blaze had not been made in the big saloon and picture-gallery. It all looked quiet and at rest, and a sudden impulse prompted Frank Stapylton to go up and see what the place looked like by moonlight.

He tied his horse to a tree in the avenue and walked up to the house, and stood still for a minute or two, wondering which was the window of the room wherein his love was caged.

It seemed to him, as he stood there, that there never was a house with so many windows in it as this one, and that there never was a house in which it was more difficult to determine from the outside the whereabouts of a single room. It was in vain at first that he tried to remember on which part of the terrace the picture-gallery windows opened. It was in vain (at first) that he strove to remember at which end of the picture-gallery Cecil's room was situated. But presently memory and his vision cleared, and with an instinct that was afterward proved to be unerring, he made way straight to a spot that was immediately under the window of her ante-room.

It was still comparatively early, only about eleven o'clock, but deep peace reigned over this portion of the house. The only sound

he heard, as he waited here on this clear winter night, was the shivering sigh of the wind as it passed through the leaves of a mighty magnolia-tree which was trained up against the wall.

Its branches separated at her window, met again at the top, and shot up even higher over the house, stout, strong branches, fully equal to bearing the weight of a man. As the belief that they would do so dawned upon him, he acted upon it, and, without pausing to consider what he would do when he got to it, he began ascending this natural ladder to Clarice's window.

The boughs bent and gave, but were tough and did not break, and presently he was up with his face on a level with the glass, and a spasm of joy almost made him exclaim aloud as he discovered there were no shutters. Heavy curtains concealed the room from him, but there were no shutters.

His position on the bough of the sturdy shrub was a secure one. He was able to take time before deciding on his next move, and the first thing he did was to take a solemn oath that he would not go back until he had discovered all there was to discover in the room, between which and himself only a frail pane of glass interposed. To smash it would be to make a noise, to attract the attention of numbers who would overpower him, and get himself kicked out. To try to lift the sash would be mere folly, for it was securely hasped. Not being addicted to burglarious exploits, he was unprovided with the proper tools. But—happy thought—he had a diamond ring.

To take it off and draw it sharply along the side of a pane was the work of a moment; and though the sound set his teeth on edge, he knew that it was not sufficiently loud to rouse a drowsy nurse. He took confidence from his cause also, and from a loving recollection of the law of chances, and went on making sharp clean cuts—waiting a short time between each one to find out if he had roused attention

—until the pane fell out into his hand, and he was enabled to undo the fastening of the window.

It all went in a smooth groove, fortunately, and so he raised the sash noiselessly, and slipped into the room that was not divided by bars and bolts from the love of his life and the mystery of Larpington House.

It was a perilous position, and what was he to gain by it? Unquestionably, he had violated every social and legal obligation by breaking into his neighbor's house in the way he had at such an hour of the night. Nevertheless, the cause justified him, he felt; and so he looked round for a hiding-place wherein he might bide events until the morning.

Presently he found a spacious closet, before the door of which a curtain fell. It was hung with dresses, and cloaks, and shawls, and of these he made a sufficiently comfortable couch, on which he rested himself until day broke and Clarice's voice roused him.

He had been asleep, sound asleep, to his own great surprise, but a clear remembrance of all the circumstances by which he was surrounded was upon him instantly. He recollected his poor horse in the avenue with a pang, and his love for Cecil and her vicinity with a throb of pleasure that was dashed with pain—for simultaneously, also, he remembered her marriage and her madness.

Time passed, and by-and-by he knew that she must be nearly dressed, for he heard the nurse come into the anteroom, and then call back to her charge to know "What dress she would wear this morning?" and he felt that instantly the door of the closet where the dresses were lying would be opened, and he would be discovered.

"I shall be sorry to hurt the woman," he said to himself, "but some way or other I must silence her at once, before she has time to sound the alarm and spoil my game."

And as he thought this the closet door opened, and the nurse saw him.





CHAPTER XV.

EMMY'S CONFESSION.

THE nurse opened the door, and looked at him; and her look of ghastly awe drove him into instant action. In another moment he knew that she would either scream or gurgled herself off into loud-sounding hysterics. It was essential to his interests that she should do neither the one nor the other. His manly instinct taught him that if he were melodramatic, so would she be; whereas, if he exhibited self-possession, she would find the manner infectious, and exhibit it also. Accordingly, in a low, perfectly composed voice, he said,

"I'm a friend of Mrs. Waldron's. You needn't be alarmed."

He looked so utterly unlike a burglar, so utterly unlike any human machine that could be charged with bad intentions, that the nurse, in spite of the suspicious nature of his position, was re-assured to the point of preserving strict silence, which was all he wanted of her. Having rewarded her for her self-command with a sovereign, he stepped out into the room, telling her his name at the same time, and promising her that, whatever was the end of this exploit of his, he would take care that she should be well rewarded and held guiltless.

"Directly she is dressed, let me walk into her room without a word of introduction from you, and if the result of my sudden appearance has the effect I anticipate, we'll have her out of this house before another hour is over our heads," he whispered; and the nurse mutely indicated that she would obey him.

The few minutes that he passed between giving this information and its being obeyed, were minutes of the wildest anxiety. "Supposing," he told himself over and over again, "that he should have been misled by a fancied resemblance only between the sketch and the voice of this Clarice to the Cecil of his youth.

Well, the only thing for him now to do was to go at it straight, and either bear her off, or bear like a man the disappointment of its not being her." Just as he came to this conclusion, the nurse opened the door, and softly beckoned him into the room in which Gilbert had been ushered by Emmeline Vicary; and in another moment his doubts were solved, and he found himself once more with her who had been Cecil Rashleigh.

Her recognition of him was as instantaneous, as thorough, as unfeignedly joyful as his was of her. In answer to his cry of "Cecil!" she came swiftly to him with outstretched hands, with almost inarticulate words of joy and surprise, with a face all aglow with hope and pleasure. As he caught the hands and bent over them, kissing them tenderly, she said,

"You'll know my name, won't you? You'll tell them that I am Cecil—"

"Rashleigh," he said, as she paused. But she shook her head in weary disappointment, and told him,

"I was Cecil Rashleigh when I knew you—oh, so long ago! but—"

"You have married since, and had another name, which I have never known," he said, half bitterly.

"And it's gone from me, as Cecil Rashleigh had, and as yours has. What are you called?" she added, abruptly; and a light of fuller and more perfect recognition flashed over her face, as he replied,

"Frank Stapylton."

"Put on her shawl and bonnet, or something," he said, hurriedly, to the nurse. "She is not the person they pretend she is. She is not Mrs. Waldron's—"

His words were arrested by a cry from Cecil that seemed to leap out joyfully from her heart.

"Waldron is the name I had forgotten!" she rang out thrillingly. "I am Cecil Waldron now, Frank; and you'll tell all the world that I am, won't you?"

He realized the truth in an instant then. The girl he loved had married his old friend, George Waldron, and they had neither of them liked to hurt his (Frank's) feelings by telling him of the fact. She had married George Waldron! She was the woman of whom George Waldron had written as the fair-faced angel of his life! She was the genuine owner of Larpington House, and the woman who passed as Mrs. Waldron was an impostor.

"I shall get you out of this place at once," he hurriedly explained. "I shall take you to the house of the dearest friend I have in the world"—he meant Horatia—until you can prove your right to come back here as the mistress of the place."

"The mistress of this place?" she asked, vaguely, and he told her,

"Yes; the mistress of Larpington House."

"Ah! he used to talk of Larpington House," she said, sadly, with the tears welling from her eyes. "And I'm here, am I?"

"Yes; but you shall not be here a minute longer as a prisoner," Frank said, valiantly, trying to think out and devise a means of evading all the difficulties that would bar their egress as he spoke; for he had resolved upon playing the part of a Lochinvar to the extent of bearing her away at once upon the good steed that was waiting for him in the avenue. "You shall not be here a minute longer," he was repeating with fervor, and a nervous feeling that he must needs say something to fill up the time which the nurse was wasting in looking for a warm cloak, when a heavy hand was placed upon his shoulder, and he found himself twisted round face to face with Mr. Carter.

"I am come just in time, it seems," that gentleman observed, coolly.

"Not in time," Frank said, hotly; "for I have found out all you have been lying and scheming to conceal. I have found out that this lady is George Waldron's widow, and that you are a gang of impostors."

Mr. Carter laughed. "Poor Clarice!" he said, in insulting tones, that made Frank Stapylton's blood boil. "Poor Clarice! It is not often that a girl who goes mad for love of her mother's husband finds another man ready and willing to take up the cudgels in her defense. Come quietly away with me now, Mr. Stapylton, and we'll have a talk over the matter, and at the end of it

you'll find out how completely you have been deceived by a fair face and a false tongue."

Frank Stapylton was as heartily averse to any thing like a compromising policy as any man could be. But he felt his inability to pursue any other. Indisputably Mr. Carter had the power to turn him not only out of the room, but out of the house; for every servant in it would have sided with the mad doctor, not out of love, but out of fear. Accordingly, after a whispered assurance to Cecil that he would be with her again soon, backed by a power that should free her, Frank followed Carter, and had a conversation which need not be recorded, since it was (and was felt to be by Frank) merely a neatly-linked-together chain of lies. However, he felt it to be necessary to lull to rest the suspicions Mr. Carter evidently felt, in spite of his well-assumed cool indifference, and finally went out of the house, admitting the possibility of its being merely a case of mistaken identity.

As soon as he was clear of Larpington House grounds (he found that his horse had been carefully stabled) he craved for the sympathy in his discovery and consequent joy which only a woman could accord to him, and so rode back with all speed to the Bridge House. It was a relief to him to find that Gilbert Denham had gone out, and that Horatia was alone. Instinctively he felt that the sister's co-operation would be heartier than the brother's.

"I can tell my tale better if we go out and walk up and down in the garden," he said, in his restlessness. And so they went out, and she listened to the succinctly-told first portion of his adventure, with tender womanly interest that strenuously kept under any sign of wounded or selfishly jealous feeling. But when he announced the fact of his conviction that Cecil Rashleigh, his early love, was now Cecil Waldron, widow of George Waldron, and rightful owner of the estates that Horatia had always regarded as little Gerald's, the intensity of the motherly feeling asserted itself, and she spoke cruelly,

"Marry her, marry her, and be happy; and Heaven bless your happiness! But, for mercy's sake, don't put her in the way of my boy's interests; don't conjure up imaginary rights for her—rights that have no existence save in her mad brain. Mr. Stapylton, *don't*, by your conduct to my son, turn me, his mother, and your warmest friend, into your hottest enemy."

"But I believe so firmly in what I'm suggesting to you," he said, simply, in his utter amazement. "I believe that she is George Waldron's widow; and if she is—"

"If she is! Oh, my boy, my boy, you'll never get your own; for she hasn't even reason to urge her to restore it to you!" Horatia broke out bitterly. "Mr. Stapylton, I have one favor to ask of you. Before you tell any one, even my brother, of your fancied discovery, give me a day or two to think in—give me a little time to get reconciled to the position. My poor little boy! Why couldn't you have found your fate in her, without making a romance about her which threatens the destruction of his fortunes?"

"Because the romance is a reality," he answered, sadly enough. "If I could see her herself again, and marry her, and take her away, I'd let Larpington House, and all belonging to it, go to your boy, or to any one else, gladly enough. But I can't; it wouldn't be just, don't you see?"

He spoke heartily, sympathetically, truthfully; and she was a woman to respond heartily to any one of these three things.

"No, it wouldn't be just, and it would only be generous to my boy in a way he must resent when he grows up to be the honorable man he must be. Tell my brother—tell the whole world at once, Frank."

"And always remember that I told you first of all," he interrupted, gratefully. "I don't know how it is, but I think of you and turn to you before any one else. I never made such a friend of any one before, never!"

"It's because of Arthur," she attempted to explain.

"No. I don't think that my friendship for Arthur has any thing at all to do with the much warmer friendship I have for you; it's sympathy—nothing else can account for it. I think of you, and want to tell you every thing that occurs to me, and nearly every thought I have. You'll always be my first friend, won't you, Mrs. Arthur?"

It was rather hard on her this appeal, for she loved the man who made it, and he only wanted her friendship. But she was a woman who could only answer such an appeal graciously and gracefully.

"I will always be your firm friend, Frank; your first friend must be your wife; no woman can submit to the idea of her husband taking his confidences to any other woman than herself."

"I suppose you're right," he answered, thoughtfully; "but I haven't thought of Cecil as any thing but the girl I loved, you see; I don't think of talking to her as I do to you."

Horatia was strongly tempted to say, "If you did she couldn't understand you;" but she checked the impulse, and said,

"The desire to talk to her and her only will come quickly enough, I suspect. How bewildering it is to think of the one I have only heard as Clarice, as George Waldron's widow."

"Yes, and how strange it is that the widows of the two fellows I liked best in the world should be the women who are the dearest to me; you'll forgive me for saying that you are dear to me, Mrs. Waldron, for you are as dear as a sister."

All this was very gratifying and complimentary, but really poor Horatia may be forgiven for feeling that she had had enough of it. Platonic affection is a very beautiful thing in itself; but when it is proffered in the place of the love a woman is yearning for, its beauty seems of a pale and tame order. It was an absolute relief to Horatia Waldron now to see her brother come in. His presence she knew would be a check on those ardent protestations of friendship which Frank was so lavishly pouring out.

"Now tell Gilbert at once," she said. "You'll tell the story better without my presence, perhaps, so I'll leave you." And then she left the two men alone, and Gilbert Denham learned that Frank had been beforehand in the matter of clearing up the mystery about Clarice.

They soon arranged their plan of action. Mr. Stapylton, as a magistrate, had the power to demand that the person of a lady who was kept in confinement under false pretenses, should be rendered up to her nearest friends. Mrs. Arthur Waldron was her nearest friend. Accordingly, accompanied by two constables, they went up to Larpington House, and in the name of the law carried off the lady who had been known there as Clarice.

They took her back to the Bridge House for a few days until Larpington House could be cleared of the impostors, and the mystery about the impostors cleared up. And there was little difficulty about doing this latter thing; for now that the chances of securing Gilbert Denham were fading away, Emmeline Vicary told the whole story.

"There is only one thing I ask of you,"

she said, as she and her mother came into the room in which Mrs. Arthur Waldron, Frank Stapylton, and Gilbert Denham sat awaiting the explanation, "and that is, that if I tell you all there is to be told, you will let us get away—you won't prosecute us; if you do, it will do you no good, and it will make us worse women than we are already."

She commenced speaking in a hard, sulky tone, but as she wound up her appeal her voice shook, and the tears came into her eyes. It was the softest mood into which she had ever been betrayed, and she was betrayed into it by love. She knew that this would be the last time she should ever see Gilbert Denham; and the agony of this knowledge was stronger even than the agony of feeling that she was a found-out swindler, who would presently be hurled from her high estate.

They had none of them the heart to be just and nothing more. So they promised the guilty pair of crushed women immunity from the punishment that was due to them, and the freedom they did not deserve.

"Go away as soon as you have told all there is to tell," Frank Stapylton said, impatiently, "and I hope with all my heart we shall never see or hear any thing more of you; couple of she-demons that you are, I believe you drove that angel mad."

"That angel went mad when her husband, George Waldron, died," Miss Vicary sneered, "or I should not have been tempted to do what I have done; but I'll begin at the beginning."

"I saw Mr. and Mrs. George Waldron for the first time about six months after their marriage, when I entered her service as her maid. She was a weak, excitable woman. Yes, Mr. Stapylton, lovely as she is, it was a constant source of wonder to me how George Waldron, being what he was, could have attached himself as he did to a mere pretty fool—and she was an imperious mistress, and from the day I entered her service she was jealous of me."

"Impossible," Mrs. Arthur Waldron interrupted, scornfully.

"Ridiculous," both men exclaimed.

"Impossible and ridiculous as you think it, I tell you it is true," she went on eagerly; "she was jealous of me; and if he had lived longer she would have had reason to be jealous of me, for George Waldron saw that I was clever, and knew that I admired him more than any man I had ever seen. He was too much in love with

his fair angel Cecil to take notice of these facts then, but he was a man just like other men, vain and selfish; and if he had lived long enough to tire of his pretty fool he would have taken notice of them.

"I traveled about with them for months in France and Italy, mostly in out-of-the-way places, for they were so satisfied with each other that they had no desire to see any of their friends and acquaintances. From being with her a great deal, and she being weak, as I said, I found out a great many things about them. I found out, for instance, that he didn't wish ever to meet you, Mr. Stapylton, for his angel had told him how madly in love with her you were at Brighton, and how you wanted to marry her. 'He's George's dearest friend,' she used to lisp out, 'and it would be death to him to see me as George's wife.' Yes, Mr. Stapylton, she used to say that to me, her servant; how do you like the idea of that?"

"I heard him pay you a great compliment once," she continued, abruptly turning to Horatia; "he had received a letter from you and your photograph, and he said, 'What a lucky fellow Arthur had been to get such a combination of beauty and brains.' That was not too pleasing to her, you may rest assured. If ever she does recover her reason, she'll hate you more than any one else in the world. Well, these recollections are not so pleasant that I need dwell upon them so. I got to care for George Waldron more than was good for me—more than I ever cared for any one else until"—(she paused and looked at Gilbert Denham, and then went on)—"until, no matter what, for that's past too. And when he died I was at first nearly as broken-hearted as my mistress. When I came out of my first sorrow, the people of the little inn where we were staying, an out-of-the-way place, told me my mistress was mad. Then I sent for my mother, and as soon as she could move Mrs. George Waldron, we took her away to Paris until mother could communicate with the lawyer who managed the Larpington property, and learn enough from the letters we found to enable her to pass herself off as the widow.

"It was all easy enough, for none of his friends knew any thing of the woman he had married, and our friends believed that my sister Clarice, who died just about that time in her situation in Paris, had really gone mad, and that we didn't like her to be seen. Only Mr. Carter knew the real truth, and—perhaps you won't be surprised to learn that he is my mother's husband."

She made a pause here, and in pity for the woman who had so debased herself, none of them spoke. Presently she resumed,

"Mrs. Arthur Waldron, your brother and you, between you, have hunted me into a hole like a rat; and what have you gained by it?"

I know that you have disliked us very much, but I'm woman enough to know that you'll ache more when you see George Waldron's angel-faced widow reigning here as Mr. Stapylton's wife. The real contest between the Two Widows dates from to day."

CHAPTER XVI.

"YOU WERE FREE TO CHOOSE."

IT is not necessary to write down a description of all the wearisome legal details that had to be gone into by those who acted on behalf of George Waldron's widow before her right to the estate could be clearly proved. Suffice it to say, that her claim was finally established in the eyes of all men, and that five months after the date of Miss Vicary's disclosure Mrs. Waldron was back at Larpington House.

Very carefully, very considerably, and very cleverly had Horatia Waldron acted during this long interval on her sister-in-law's behalf. She had given Cecil all the benefits to be derived from her own tender, true womanly sympathy, compassion, and companionship. She had carefully fostered every weak sign of returning memory, every faint indication of interest both in the past and present. She had encouraged intercourse between Cecil and the man who loved her; and at the end of five months she was rewarded for her prolonged self-abnegation by seeing Cecil in possession of all the powers of mind that had been her original portion.

And these were not prodigious.

In all other things Miss Vicary had been false and deceitful, but there had been neither falsehood nor deception in the estimate she had formed and worded about her former mistress. Even when in fullest possession of all her faculties, Cecil would never be more than a lovely, weak-minded, capricious woman, who would infallibly weary Frank Stapylton before long.

There was mingled pleasure and pain to Horatia in this conviction. Loyal and true as she was in all her dealings with Cecil, and in all her speeches about Cecil, she still was woman enough to be glad that Frank should be compelled to acknowledge her superiority, both mentally and morally, to Cecil; for he had

sought to make Horatia love him before Cecil had re-appeared on the canvas of his life and obliterated the tender impression the other woman had made.

And, on the other hand, she was true woman enough to feel grieved and sorry for the disappointment that would surely be the portion of the man she loved as soon as the glamour was over. No brainless beauty would hold Frank's heart for any length of time. And in his impulsiveness he was likely to pledge his heart to this brainless beauty before he had time to realize that she was only this, and nothing more.

As so much of mind as she had recovered its balance and its tone, and as her memory strengthened, Cecil's real nature developed itself, and Horatia learned to know her as the shallow creature she was. Frank Stapylton had not formally worded his affection for her yet; but though he was not her declared lover she gave herself all those little airs of authority over him, played off all those little coquettish caprices upon him, which are so irritating to another woman to witness, especially when that other woman loves him.

And Frank, though he had not declared himself yet, seemed to like the position of being publicly very much at the feet of the lovely Cecil, who flattered him by giving him her undivided attention on all occasions of their meeting. It did not occur to him that perhaps he owed this honor to the fact of there not being any other man present, Gilbert Denham having taken his departure long ago, before Cecil had learned to know him at all, in fact.

The real Mrs. Waldron celebrated her restoration to reason and her rights by making Larpington House the scene of a constant succession of *gayeties*, that kept the whole neighborhood in a state of excitement. The love for her husband, which overbalanced her mind

when he died, seemed to have evaporated during her madness. She very rarely spoke of him at all; and when she did, though she called him "poor George," there was a tone of indifference in her mention of him that made Frank feel he need not fear a dead rival in her heart.

"But how about a living one?" he asked himself one day, when he saw her surrounded by a group of men, each of whom was demonstrating devotion to the rich, beautiful young widow. And as he watched the scene, a pang of jealousy shot through his heart. He had made so sure of winning her, that the first shadow of a doubt of his doing so cast him down. Naturally he took his difficulty to Horatia.

"Do you think that Cecil fancies I haven't been very keen about it?" he asked, moodily, directing Horatia's attention to Cecil as he spoke. Mrs. Waldron was making up little button-hole bouquets for two or three of the young men, "making them up with a meaning," she said, "which they could find out if they understood the language of flowers."

Horatia looked at Cecil for a minute before she answered him, and he saw the scorn gathering in her face.

"Cecil and I are not on confidential terms, you must understand that, Frank," she said, earnestly; "but I don't think she can fancy you have shown any want of keenness on the subject. I am sure you have exhibited your devotion freely enough."

"You don't think that she has been flirting with me, do you?" he went on questioning. "I heard her saying just the same sort of things to those other fellows just now as she has said to me over and over again; and I thought she meant them, don't you know. You don't think she has been flirting with me?"

"I should think it impossible," Horatia said, warmly. To her it seemed impossible, utterly impossible, that any woman should dream of playing fast and loose with Frank Stapylton.

"I have been fond of her so long, you see. I declare, after that Brighton affair, I never thought of any other woman but her until I met you; and then I got so fond of you as a friend, that I can't help boring you with my troubles whenever I'm in any." Then he paused, and looked at Cecil again with his heart in his eyes; and Horatia had time to marvel how any one could carry on "gay fooling" with other men when Frank was looking at her in such a way.

The group round Cecil had dispersed, leaving only one man sitting on a lower chair than hers by her side. She was leaning back, smelling a rose, and kissing it, and affectedly refusing to give it to him. As he bent forward, pleading for it, with upturned face and admiring eyes, by-standers might reasonably have been forgiven for seeing in him a worshiper at Cecil's shrine.

"Come and play and sing, Frank," Horatia said, impatiently, as she marked the jealousy gathering in his face. "Don't let any one else see how it affects you."

"I'm not in the vein for it to-night. Hear her! She's telling that fool, Danvers, who boasts about every woman, that she couldn't *flirt* with him. She has told me that I am the only man she couldn't flirt with. She has given him that rose after kissing it."

He muttered all this angrily in a low voice; but low as the muttering was, Mrs. Waldron caught a sound of it, and with a light whisper dismissed her other attendant, and then called Frank to her side. He went, meaning to be frigid and bitter, and at the first word from her his revengeful resolve melted away, and she wound another coil of the blue ribbon round his neck.

She had another rose in her hand by this time, and Horatia watched the pantomime of the flower with mixed amusement and indignation.

"Frank," Cecil began, laying the rose on his arm as he seated himself, "I thought you were never coming near me this evening. Why have you condemned me to the task of entertaining Mr. Danvers and Co., when I wanted you to entertain me?"

"It seems to me you accepted the task readily enough," he answered, striving to keep up an appearance of cool dignity. But all his striving was proved vain a moment after, when she said,

"I am obliged to be attentive to other people in my own house; that reserved, ill-tempered Mrs. Arthur Waldron won't help me; so it all falls on me; and you make the task more difficult for me by looking displeased."

"It's because I can think of you, and you only," he told her, fervently. "It's because I grudge every look and word you give to any other fellow." At this juncture the rose was surrendered to him. "It's because I love you so dearly, Cecil; because I hope and believe that you will give me a different answer to the one you gave me at Brighton."

"That horrid Mrs. Arthur is watching us,"

she laughed out. "I'm afraid she guesses every word we are saying, and it wouldn't do for us to be publicly engaged yet, after all the sensation there has been about me. I do give a different answer to the one I gave at Brighton, Frank; but we must be careful, and not show ourselves too openly. You'll know that I love you, and mean to marry you, and that is enough—"

"No, it's not enough," Frank interrupted. "If you love me, and mean to marry me, why shouldn't we show our feelings openly!—And why shouldn't all the world know that we are going to be married?"

"So many unforeseen things occur," she said, pensively shaking her head; and by this time her hand was on his arm, and she was pressing it tenderly.

"You're doubtful of me, are you?" he cried out, in a much louder voice than "was desirable," the discreet young widow thought. "You're not doubtful of me, are you? Oh no, Cecil, you're not doubtful of me!"

"No, no, no; I'm not in the least doubtful of you. But, Frank, impulsiveness and haste are forgiven in very young people, but not when a woman has had experiences, and another husband. Do be reasonable."

"Then you're doubtful of yourself," he declared.

"No, I am not doubtful of myself, I'm only prudent. Men are so imprudent. Now, do go and talk to that wet blanket, Mrs. Arthur Waldron. I believe she's jealous of me; I know she hates me. I must try and make it pleasant for Mr. Danvers. He came down from London on purpose to be introduced, so the reward of a little conversation that means nothing won't be too great, will it?"

"It seems to mean so much," Mr. Stapylton remarked, reproachfully.

"But it does not, and you know that it does not. Why, it's all light and superficial with Mr. Danvers. I am only real with you, dear Frank."

And with this "Dear Frank" had to be satisfied, for Mr. Danvers had his reward immediately, and Frank was cast adrift on his own resources.

"She can't be flirting with me, can she?" he said, reverting to the original topic, and returning to his original position by Horatia's side; and then he went on to tell her, under the seal of the strictest secrecy, that Cecil and himself had just pledged themselves to one another, and Horatia had to relinquish the last hope that had lightened life to her lately, namely, that the folly of the feeble beauty would have weaned him before he took the fatal step.

The hope died in agony in that woman's heart, as the man she loved, who was so sure of her sympathy, made the communication; and as soon as he had finished it she spoke.

"I will preserve your secret, Frank; though why there should be any thing 'secret' in the affair at all I don't understand. She is free to be chosen; you were free to choose. From the bottom of my heart I hope you have done wisely and well."

He looked up at her suddenly; there were tears in her eyes, and her lips were quivering. The conviction smote him in that instant that it would have been wiser and better to have chosen her instead of that old love of his. And something in her face told Horatia what he was feeling.

It was a very brief scene, but the faces of the actors in it were very eloquent, and the beautiful violet eyes of Cecil Waldron took in every detail of it.





CHAPTER XVII.

"THE VESTAL REASON SHALL WATCH THE FIRE WAKED BY LOVE."

THE one thing needful to render the fact of being engaged to be married more harassing than it is its normal condition to be, both to man and woman, is the folly of keeping the said fact secret.

Very young girls, especially if they have led the ordinary, uneventful girlish life, may be believed when they state that they were "never so happy in their lives" as now, when they have solemnly pledged themselves to take up life's most important responsibilities in company with some man of whose qualifications for the office they know little, and think less. But I really doubt if any woman of five-and-twenty feels any thing but sore perplexity and half-repentance when she finds that she has gone into the bondage of a promise to marry.

Miserable doubts arise the instant the promise is given—doubts that never suggested themselves while he was the wooer only, not the winner—doubts of his temper, of his tact, of his talent—doubts of his possessing half such a capacity for loving as does some other man who possibly might have proposed if this one had not intervened—doubts of one's own stability and power of enduring the long monotony of an engagement that sets a young woman apart from the throng, and suggests to other men the propriety of their not attempting to make themselves agreeable to her—doubts of his being the Lancelot of one's life, and dread fears of his being only the king, only Arthur, and of Lancelot turning up later on, when to love him will be sin, and to leave him will be death—doubts of every thing, in fact, save the truth of the feeling that one has made a fool of one's self.

Ah me! if I had my time to go over again, I would save myself a world of doubting agony by marrying a man the same hour

I accepted him, provided that hour were canonical, of course. And as for bearing the burden in secrecy, unsupported by the sympathy of a sensible section of my fellow-creatures, verily I should have lived in vain if I could be guilty of pursuing that course.

The majority of these sentiments and sensations were the portion of Frank Stapylton to the full as much as they were the portion of Cecil Waldron in those of which I am writing. Their betrothal had been hasty, but it was binding; and both of them felt it to be so, and both of them disliked bonds.

It is a fact that from the moment Frank Stapylton attained what he firmly believed had been the hot desire of his heart for so many years, his heart ceased to have any share in the matter. His taste and his honor told him that he ought to love and marry her; but his reason and his heart told him that he ought not to have taken such an obligation upon himself. Truly he might have addressed these words to her:

"Couldst thou look as dear as when
First I sighed for thee;
Couldst thou make me feel again
Every wish I breathed thee then,
Oh, how blissful life would be!
Hopes that now beguiling leave me,
Joys that lie in slumbers cold,
All would wake, couldst thou but give me
One smile 'dear' as those of old."

Cecil gave him smiles freely enough when there was no other man to share them with him; but the magic was gone from them for him. They were very bright, very sweet, very becoming to the radiant violet eyes and perfect mouth; but they had lost their power of warming his heart. The changeability, the caprices, the light gayety of manner, the indifference to every bit of real life that was not amusing—all these things, which had seemed charmingly child-like and unsophisticated to him before,

bored and slightly disgusted him after his engagement. Frank Stapylton was not a genius, but he had a strong understanding, and equally strong affections, and he did shrink from the thought of what his life would be when this woman, who had neither head nor heart, was his wife.

For all her beauty, her grace, and her womanly wiles, she was a wearisome woman to make love to. She could flirt from behind her fan, give soft, sweet looks from her glorious eyes, and kiss roses effusively; but she could not respond to the touch or the tone of love. He would as soon have kissed and caressed the marble Venus in her saloon as he would press her lips or clasp her hand. It was no greater trial to leave her than it was joy to come to her. And he acknowledged these truths to himself, and, being an honorable fellow, mourned over them.

Essentially a soulless woman, but fair enough to bewilder any man, fully realizing her own fairness, and utterly failing to appreciate her own want of soul, the idea never occurred to her that there was any thing wanting in Frank's love, or in his manner of developing it. While he would come to her obediently at her own appointed time; while he would listen without interruption to her recital of how "jealous poor George" was of every man who caught sight of her; while he portrayed interest in her new dresses and her interminable schemes of gaiety and plans for "getting people together," Cecil was perfectly happy and satisfied. She did not desire any display of ardent love—when there was no one by to witness it and say how "madly infatuated that fellow is!" She infinitely preferred soft speeches and subtle hints of hopeless attachment and desperate devotion from two or three men at the same time. These she could answer, parry, respond to brightly, lightly, eagerly enough. But a touch of "thoroughness" would have revealed her in all her beautiful hollowness—and so, perhaps, it was just as well that the touch of thoroughness was wanting in Frank Stapylton's love-making.

Meantime the touch of thoroughness was not wanting in his friendship with Horatia Waldron. Though he did not belong to the order of men who wear their hearts on their sleeves, there was nothing secretive about him; and so, being tongue-tied toward the rest of the world, by Cecil's desire, he spoke out the more freely to this woman, from whose truthful lips friendship's balmy words fell with such thrilling force. No wonder that he sought her

often—far oftener than was wise, she knew, but still not oftener than was dearly pleasant to her. No wonder that he told out his thoughts to her, that he talked of hopes that had been high, of love that had been true, of life as it might have been, to this woman who could respond to him.

He came to her in the long summer evenings, when Cecil did not want him; he never defrauded his liege lady of aught that was her rightful due; and somehow or other the long summer evenings, when Cecil did not want him, came to be the most eagerly anticipated and the most fondly-looked-back-upon of this period of his life. He came to Horatia for rest, for sympathy, for interest, for companionship, for pleasure; and she gave him all these things in unconsciously giving him her love—love so profound, so intense, so unselfish, that she would have sacrificed every thing on earth (but her children) to have made Cecil, who was to be his wife, the first object of interest to him in the world.

There came one evening when the mask (put on by such faithful hands) nearly fell off, when the narrow boundary-line between love and friendship was so nearly crossed, that Horatia awoke to a sense of her own danger. Awoke to a sense of her own danger, but remained steeped in slumberous ignorance as to his. Then—being only a woman—she determined to bear, and brave, and risk all possible pain for herself, saying, "On my head this fatal folly of loving in the wrong place will rebound—on my head only; he knows nothing about it. While the dream will last, it shall last, without my making an effort to wake from it."

The scene in which she played the leading part on this occasion was such a pretty one! A fair, soft evening in June, with the "lilies and languors of virtue, and the roses and raptures of love," lading the air with a wealth of perfume that made every one who inhaled it believe for the time that life was meant to be beautiful and sweet, and that those who lived in it were to blame when ugly sights and hideous sounds and evil odors prevailed.

A dull evening—according to the ordinary estimate of dullness—it had promised to be at first. It is true that she was well supplied with new books, that a new song of Gounod's had been sent to her this day by her brother, and that all the world seemed to be steeped in the rich golden light of the setting sun; but there was no one near to hear her comments on the books, no one to listen to the rapturous

words of the song, no one to bask with her in the beautiful golden light; and so her heart felt sadder than it was wont to feel, and terribly alone.

But it so happened that Cecil did not want Frank Stapylton this evening; and he, having the habit of female companionship upon him very strongly at this juncture, came and bestowed his liberty on Horatia. He came in with that look of weary dissatisfaction on his face that appeals so powerfully to women when they behold it on the faces of the men who interest them; and instantly she divined that something was vexing and perplexing him, and made it her task to chase away the shadow of the vexation and perplexity by a frank display of all the sympathy for him with which her heart was charged.

"The heat has been too much for us both, Frank. I am languid and weary. I feel house-bound, in fact, and I've done nothing all day but lie on the sofa and wish that, as we are having tropical heat, we could have tropical customs. What a boon a slave and a punkah would have been to me!"

"And I have done nothing but lie on the grass and try every kind of cooling drink that the ingenuity of man ever invented," he answered, "and all to no purpose. I reached fever-heat before midday, and have kept at it ever since until I came in here and saw you."

"And I have had a chilling effect on you?" she laughed. "Well, Frank, for once I am glad to hear it. Prolonged fever-heat is exhausting."

"Any thing but chilling," he answered, in a low voice. "I hardly know what effect you have on me," he went on. "I think I feel about you as Poe did about his Helen when he wrote—

"Thy beauty is to me
Like those Nician barks of yore,
That gently o'er a perfumed sea
The weary way-worn traveler bore
To his own native shore."

I felt weary and way-worn when I came in, and now I feel—"

He paused abruptly, and from some cause or other no words came from her to fill up the pause. They were sitting by the open window, she leaning her head back against the sash, he by her side, lounging on his elbow, idly turning over the leaves of a new magazine; and the dying light of day streamed softly in upon them, harmonizing the whole picture.

"It's like an idyl, isn't it?" he questioned, after a few moments' pause, glancing up suddenly from the page he had not been reading,

and letting his eyes rest on hers. "You, in that white dress that folds about you so gracefully, and your dusky hair clouding about your brow—you're like a dream of peace and love."

"How is Cecil?" she asked, quietly.

"Very well, and very happy, with Mr. Danvers very much at her feet, and a suspicion in her mind that I am getting jealous of him, which suspicion is utterly unfounded."*

"I am glad to hear it; jealousy is a horrible passion, I think."

"Oh, horrible; nevertheless, I should develop it fast enough under certain conditions, I assure you," he answered, laughing.

"I am glad, then, for your sake as well as hers, that those conditions are not fulfilled; you are quite right in feeling that you needn't be jealous of Mr. Danvers."

"But I tell you," he said, earnestly, "that I should be jealous of Danvers or any other fellow if I felt about Cecil as I hoped to feel when I asked her to be my wife. The truth of the matter is, she—"

"Don't let us say any thing about her," Horatia pleaded, eagerly. "You're annoyed at the present moment. Don't say that you are not; and it wouldn't be fair to her to say any thing about her to me, nor would it be fair for me to listen. Oh dear! the atmosphere will be so much clearer for us all when you are married!"

There was a pathetically tired strain in her tone, as she said this, that revealed a little more than she intended to reveal to him. But, like a man, he craved for more light, for a fuller revelation, even though it should be made to no useful end.

"Will the atmosphere be clearer for you?" he asked, softly.

"Yes, because now I am the repository of your secret, and I hate secrets and abhor mysteries."

"And is that your only reason?" He had taken her hand, and was holding it as he spoke—holding it as if by so doing he would compel her to attend to and answer him.

"That is the only reason I can give you," she said, gravely. And he lifted her hand to his lips, and pleaded,

"Do give me another. I tell you every thing. Do give me perfect confidence in return. You will, won't you? You will if you have ever cared for me at all."

Ever cared for him at all, when at that very moment she was caring for him so wildly, so madly, so hopelessly, that all her life looked dark before her, because she must yield him to

another woman! How could he—how dared he plead so hotly for her friendship, when he had so coldly renounced her love—and renounced it for the frivolous fancy of a woman who was her inferior in head, and heart, and mind, her inferior in every thing but beauty, indeed, which last possession is, after all, the best dowry we can wish for our daughters, for men prize it above all others—very properly, of course!

For one moment Horatia let him read her eyes—for one moment she let him hold her hand after he had pressed that warm kiss upon it—and in that one moment the mask nearly fell off, the boundary-line was nearly crossed. Then she recovered herself, and released them both from the spell.

"There is no other reason to give; if there were, I would treat you quite as the brother I regard you as"—poor, struggling, loving hypocrite!—"and give it to you. Ring for the lamp, will you?"

"No, no; let us have this quiet light a little longer.

"Stay with me, lady, while you may,
For life's so sad, this hour's so sweet."

And again he pleaded, with wistful eyes and a detaining hand. But she would not consent to be spell-bound a second time.

"In spite of your poetical appeal," she laughed, "I must have my lamp. Cecil and you may have the half-light, but I want to try a new song, and—"

"Cecil and I!" he muttered, impatiently. "What has come to you to-night, that you bring in Cecil's name in season and out of season? Are you afraid that I shall forget her?"

"No," she said, stoutly, though it was a hard thing to say.

"Not that she gives me much to remember her by," he went on, complainingly. "Poor George's views are things that pall upon a man after any number of vain repetitions; and she can hardly expect me to carry a catalogue of her dresses in my mind, or to dwell with fervor on the memory of Mr. Danvers's vain speeches."

"You did remember her very devotedly as the only woman you had ever loved," she said, with an effort.

"I beg your pardon. I remembered her with a sort of fictitious fidelity, as the only girl I had ever loved. My love for a woman would be something very different."

"Cooler, more reasonable, having to do more with the head than the heart," she said,

in desperation, for the subject had a fell fascination for her, dangerous as she felt it to be.

"More reasonable, if you like, but certainly not cooler; and naturally it would have to do with the head as well as the heart. I know now, when it is too late, the sort of woman—the only woman—for whom I could feel a *grand passion*."

"And now, as it is too late, you had better not nourish the idle feeling by talking about it."

"If by 'idle' you mean 'unreal,' you're mistaken," he said. "The feeling is real enough; unluckily the chances of gratifying it are wretchedly small."

She got up, half vexed, half pleased, like the thorough woman she was. Naturally she was vexed that the knowledge of his love for herself had come to him when it was too late. It was equally natural that she should be pleased by the knowledge of the fact that he loved her at all, inopportunately as it was made known to him. Still, as I have said, she was a thorough woman, and pleasure was her dominant sensation as she moved from the window to the piano.

He was following her, but she looked back and shook her head.

"No, no; stay where you are. The high notes will go through your brain if you come any nearer." And then she sang Gounod's new song, and her voice sounded as delightfully in the ears of the man who loved her as if she had been a Patti or a Nilsson.

Presently she turned round on the music-stool and told him of a "resolution she had formed." She did not mention that she had only formed it since that unfortunate fit of candor of his had warned her that the mask might fall off at any moment.

"I am quite tired of life at Larpington," she began, "and my children will soon require educational advantages that they can not get here. Don't you think I am a wise woman in determining to leave this place, and go to London, or near London?"

"Good heavens, no!" he answered, disobeying her injunction to remain where he was, and coming over to her in haste that betokened far too great an interest in her and her proceedings.

"Yes, indeed; and I thought you would have approved of my intention. When I woke from my dream"—it may be supposed that she was referring to that dream of her boy's coming into possession of the Larpington estate, which was never destined to be fulfilled now—

"when I woke from my dream, I felt that there was nothing left to keep me here now."

"Nothing left to keep you here!" he said, reproachfully. "Of course, I have no right to expect that you should think of me for an instant; but, by Jove! what a ghastly vacuum in my life your going will cause!"

Her heart palpitated in response to the genuine regret, the genuine, jealous chagrin he was displaying. But she did not dare to let its palpitations betray themselves by means of faltering tones or quivering lips. Very lightly and steadily she spoke.

"You will soon fill up that vacuum with a far nearer and dearer interest, Frank; and though I don't think for a second that you'll forget me—our friendship has been too true and sweet a thing, I think, for either of us ever to forget it—still, you won't miss me much, believe me."

"Not miss you much! My life will be a blank without you," he said, desperately. And when he said that, Horatia knew that it was well, it was wise, it was needful that she should go.

His mind was full of her the next day—full

of her and her winning charm, and the weariness that stretched out before him as he thought of her going away—full of her to the point of rendering him abstracted in the presence of Cecil, who observed the abstraction after a time, unobservant as she was generally.

"Were you very much disappointed at my not telling you to come here last evening?" she asked.

"No," he answered, truthfully; "you told me the other day, you know, that you would be engaged. Was Danvers up to his usual attractive mark?"

"He was more charming than ever, and he seemed to think me more charming than ever. Is that what is making you so glum to-day, Frank?"

He shook his head.

"What is it, then? You are not up to *your* usual attractive mark, I can assure you. Where were you last night?"

"I called on Mrs. Arthur," he stammered, a little confusedly.

"Then you must never call there again," she said, slowly.





CHAPTER XVIII.

CECIL DRAWS HER SWORD.

THEN ensued one of those foolish, recriminatory, futile dialogues which are so painfully humiliating to look back upon; dialogues which leave the conductors of them exactly in the same place at the end as they were at the beginning; dialogues in which spite supplies the eloquence of the accusation on the one side, and a full knowledge of having a very poor cause makes the defense a lame and impotent one on the other; dialogues in which the majority of us have taken part at some period or other of our lives, it is to be presumed, for we have all been unjustly treated in our time, or have treated some other unjustly—we have all spoken or been spoken to in jealous warmth—we have all done battle against some imaginary foe or rival, or defended some friend or lover from the one who depicts them as antagonists. And so we can all understand that Frank Stapylton was not exalted in his own eyes when he came out of the excited verbal contest with Cecil, in which, for the first time, she showed openly her animosity against, and jealousy of, Horatia Waldron.

Cecil had the power which is invested in the hands of a beautiful woman who holds a man's pledge to marry her—a power which is increased tenfold when a man has professed more love than he feels, and when he is heartily ashamed of falling short of his profession. The real Cecil was very different to the ideal Cecil, but he could not utterly separate them yet; and he shrank from the thought of the woman whom he had loved so long discovering that he loved her no longer.

Her jealousy was very patient to him, but it was not the jealousy an exhibition of which flatters a man's loving self-esteem. It was the jealousy of vanity, not of love. She grudged Mrs. Arthur Waldron the confidence and the friendship of Frank Stapylton, not because she desired to have these things herself, but be-

cause she disliked Mrs. Arthur Waldron, and would have preferred to feel that Horatia's life was barren of all those interests which made up the sum of life to Cecil herself.

"It's a slight to me—a slight that no other man on earth would offer me," she said, "that you should go and pay her such attention that every one in the village must know you like her. When a man is engaged, his time belongs to the woman to whom he is engaged. Poor George never gave a look or a word to any one but me."

"You must remember that my opportunities of giving you either looks or words are rather limited, Cecil. I should be with you much more than I am, if you'd let me come."

"Oh, how unjust, how dreadfully unjust you are, Frank, reproaching me for my consideration for you in that way! I don't want other people to say that I am making a slave and a fool of you, and that is what would be said if you were always about after me."

"It seems to me," Frank grumbled, "that no one could say that if it were known that we were engaged."

"But it can't be known that we are engaged. I don't want it to be known that we are engaged—yet. After all I have gone through"—Cecil always reverted to "all she had gone through," when she wanted to subdue strong men—"it's cruel, cruel of you to want to make me the talk of the neighborhood again so soon; but because I won't make myself a subject for idle gossip is no reason that you should go and make yourself conspicuous with Mrs. Arthur, and hurt my feelings. If you had a real regard for me you would cut her."

"Cecil, you would despise me if I were such a pusillanimous cur; for I should be that if, without the slightest reason, the faintest shadow of a cause, I were to cut a woman who has been uniformly my friend—a woman whose

judgment, and heart, and life are as golden as they can be."

"That's nonsense," Cecil said, pettishly; "she professes a great deal, I know, but she's reserved, and I hate reserved people; they're all bad. And as for your friendship with her—poor George used to say that friendships between young men and women were always in questionable taste; and though she isn't so very young—"

"What would poor George have said of your rather pronounced friendship with Mr. Danvers?" Frank interrupted, coolly. "I am rather interested in hearing what his views would have been on that subject."

"That is quite a different affair. I am an engaged woman—"

"And I am an engaged man."

"But she doesn't know it."

"And he doesn't know it."

"I don't know about that," Mrs. Waldron laughed, with a little air of triumph; "when men are in love, they are very quick to see. You needn't grudge him my society. He feels, poor fellow, I know he feels, that I am not for him."

"I wish with all my heart you were!" was Frank Stapylton's inward thought; but he said,

"Then, on my word, I don't think you ought to keep him dangling after you in this way. If you can see that the fellow is ready to make a fool of himself—"

"I said ready to fall in love with me. It's not very complimentary to me to find that you think that is making a fool of himself."

"It is, under the circumstances."

"Then what are you making of Mrs. Arthur Waldron?"

"It is impossible to make any thing of her but the best and nicest woman in the world."

"It is cruel to say that," Cecil piped, "when you know how I hate her, when you know what good reason I have to hate her."

"Now, what reason on earth can you possibly assign for hating her? My dear Cecil, do be reasonable, and—"

"Be reasonable, indeed! I believe she has taught you to taunt me by using that phrase. Why can't she and you let me forget that I have been mad?"

"Now, my darling, this is too much," he groaned; "I would spare you every thought of that wretched time when your life was darkened by sorrow and cruelty, and so would she, I know."

"I don't care whether she would or not, Frank. If she thinks I am ashamed of having

been afflicted because my heart was so much more tender, and my feelings so much more sensitive than other people's, she is mistaken; it's no use her attempting to play upon me for that."

"You're making her out to be a monster of cruelty," he said, with a tone of despairing resignation.

"And evidently you can say nothing in her defense."

"My partisanship does her more harm than good with you, and makes you hurl accusations that you will bitterly repent having made at her."

"Oh, Frank, you threaten me with the pangs of remorse about her! How can you do that? I couldn't live if I felt remorseful about any thing; and you quietly tell me, with mysterious certainty, that I shall feel remorseful about her! You couldn't do it if you loved me."

Feeble woman's last and strongest weapon of attack!

"You couldn't do it if you loved me!" What is a man who is professing love for her to do but declare that he does love her, and that he "won't do it again," as the children say. Happily, however, for himself, and for the reader's toleration toward Horatia's opinion of him, Frank did not so demean himself.

"Even if you doubted my love, you would not put it to such a degrading test, seriously, Cecil," he said, rather gravely. "But you do not doubt it, therefore why wrong yourself and me with these mere chimeras of your brain?"

"My brain, always my brain, becomes the topic when you have been with her," Cecil cried, petulantly. "The clever woman! She never let's you forget that my 'brain' was weaker for a time than hers is! How kind, and womanly, and sisterly, and nice it is of her! Danvers sees through her, though you don't. Danvers is so sympathetic with me, that he sees through her thoroughly."

"I wish Mr. Danvers would keep the expression of his keen sympathy to himself," Frank said, stiffly, for it is one of the most beautifully marked traits in our inconsistent natures, that however lightly we may prize our own, we do not glow with satisfaction when we discover that our own keenly appreciates being highly prized by others.

"Ah! but he's one of the men who can't keep things to themselves. He's not deceitful; you can see in a moment in his eyes what he feels; they're really speaking eyes, Frank. Have you noticed them?"

Frank had failed to "notice Mr. Danvers's eyes."

"Well, I wonder at that, because they're so peculiar—quite beautiful. There's a sort of 'love me' look in them that one doesn't often see."

"Thank Heaven for that!" Mr. Stapylton observed.

"Now, why do you say that, Frank?" Cecil, who was well mounted and eager to be off on the new hobby, asked. "Now, why do you say that?"

"Because the fewer fellows who go about with an idiotic, languishing 'love me' look in their eyes the better, I should say."

"Yes, certainly; I should agree with you, if it was idiotic. But his is not; it's a most thrilling, soul-filled glance. I wish you could see it as I do."

"Thank you; but I haven't the slightest desire to do so; the sight would be rather a sickening one."

"I really believe you're doing Mr. Danvers the honor to be jealous of him."

"You're mistaken, Cecil; I'm not doing myself the dishonor of doing any thing of the sort. The moment I found myself jealous of a fellow like Danvers, I should relinquish my right to be jealous of you at all."

"That is one of Mrs. Arthur Waldron's sentences. She thinks she talks well, and—"

"I am not in the habit of having words put into my mouth by Mrs. Arthur Waldron, or any one else, Cecil, my child. Why will you do yourself and me so much injustice?"

"Why will you irritate me into being unjust (not that I am unjust) by extolling and flattering a woman I dislike, with good reason?"

Frank sighed heavily. Cecil argued in a circle, and was now beginning at exactly the same part of the round from whence she had originally started.

"Let us leave her name out of the conversation," he said; and she answered quickly,

"So I will, if you'll leave her out of your life."

From this day, Cecil steadily interposed herself and her commands between Frank Stapylton and every opportunity he might have had of seeing Horatia. Mrs. Waldron would still invite the pair to meet under her auspices, but she sedulously kept them apart when she was not present to keep her wary watch and see with delight how Horatia winced under the estranged and altered

manner of the man who was conscious of acting a double part.

For Cecil, in drawing her sword on Horatia, had driven him over the narrow boundary-line, and, to his own sorrow, he knew that that which he felt for Arthur's widow was not friendship, but love. What wonder that, in his impotent remorse, in his pitiful helplessness, in his fettered misery, he should have taken refuge in a demeanor that was utterly foreign, and be sometimes almost repellent, and at others almost penitential, and at others almost bitter toward the woman to whom he dared not be natural?

And she partially fathomed the real motive of his chameleon-like manner at times, and at others was pained, puzzled, almost maddened by it. The change from such free, frank friendship as theirs had been to mere conventional civilities, or studied avoidance, or bitter badinage, wrung her heart and hurt her pride, but failed to kill her love.

It soon had the effect upon her of making her long to quit the place. "If I could only get out of it—get away from the probability of seeing him, and seeing him with Cecil, who likes to show him as her slave to me; if I could only wake up of a morning with the knowledge that at least I had done something to put myself out of his orbit, perhaps the sting would be less sharp, and this change might strengthen me to bear the truth."

So thinking, so hoping and believing, she hastened her preparations for leaving the Bridge House. She wrote to her brother Gilbert, begging him to come and help her to separate the household gods she meant to take, from the household gods she meant to leave behind. And for the first time in his life, Gilbert Denham was deaf to the request of his sister. He would not come back to Larpington.

During all the dreary time of selecting, and packing, and bewildering herself about a future residence, Frank Stapylton kept away from Mrs. Arthur Waldron, greatly to his own shame and sorrow, and intensely to the satisfaction of Cecil, who felt like a victorious general driving a foe from the field.

"You see," young Mrs. Waldron would say triumphantly to her humbled betrothed, "directly you leave off going there she finds the place unendurable, and quits it. That convinces me that she thought you were making love to her, whether you were or not."

"Perhaps we had better not analyze the reasons why I don't go there any more," he answered, in intemperate haste; and some-

thing in his face, and tone, and manner made Cecil feel that it would be as well for her to proclaim the engagement and bind him faster without delay.

The day dawned that was the last before that fixed for Horatia Waldron to leave the house to which she had come in hope for her boy, and was now leaving in something very like despair about herself. She was glad, and she was sorry, that the time was so near for her to get out of the atmosphere that was full of such sweet poison for her; glad with a gladness, and sorry with a sorrowfulness, that can only be felt and only be understood by a woman who is in love.

The house was dismantled; its charm was altogether dispelled. The children were playing at wild beasts in the empty drawing-room, and the servants were looking as if the "curse had come upon them" because the appliances that tended to their comfort were most of them packed up. There was something uncanny about the familiar place, something unreal, perplexing, disturbing. She longed to get away from it; and yet she loved it so well for its associations! For it was here that she had shackled herself with the shackles woman loves so well; it was here she had come to a knowledge of all her strength and all her weakness; here she had lost her peace, and found her master.

Small marvel that she longed to leave a place that was to her both Paradise and prison! Small marvel that there was no rest for her body or mind during the whole of this day, for she was feeling

"A few short hours, and I am borne
Far from the fetters I have worn!
A few short hours, and I am free!
And yet I shrink from liberty,
And look, and long to give my soul
Back to thy cherishing control.
Control? Ah! no; thy bond was meant
Far less for bond than ornament,
And tho' its links be firmly set,
I never found them gall me yet.

* * * * *
And now the truth comes swiftly on—
The truth I dare not think upon,
The last sad truth so oft delayed—
"These joys were only born to fade."

In her pitiful restlessness, in her desperate disquiet, in her agonizing knowledge that never again—oh! never again after this day—would she have even the miserable satisfaction of knowing that he was near her, she could not remain in one place, nor beguile the time with any occupation. She had taken leave of Mrs. Waldron—who had taken the opportunity of treating the subject of her engagement to

Frank in an exhaustive manner—and she had said good-bye to all the people in the village. The only one whom she had known in this place who had not wished her farewell and God-speed was Frank Stapylton.

And she was going away to-morrow.

She tried hard, poor thing, to think that the greater part of the sorrow she felt in leaving Larpington was caused by the forced renunciation of all her hopes respecting little Gerald and the succession to the estates. But, loving, loyal mother as she was, she knew that in striving to do this she was striving to lie to herself; the real sting lay in the fact that she was leaving Frank Stapylton.

The woods were in all their summer beauty now, wreathed with honeysuckle and brier roses, fragrant with wild thyme, radiant with the scarlet pimpernel, the blue "bird's-eyes," and the purely golden celandine. "The woods will be better than the house," she thought, "for no one will come there, and I can look as I like, without fear of any one making mistakes."

The woods stretched all round Larpington, but the one to which she went had a river running through it, and this decided her choice; for the river was well filled with trout; and with a rod and a fly in one's hand a human being may be as sadly preoccupied in mind, as absorbed and altogether apart from others, as he or she pleases, without reproach.

She placed herself under the shade of the bank, on the trunk of a tree that had fallen right across the stream, forming a natural bridge; and there she sat through the heat of the day, dreaming, and letting the trout escape her.

By-and-by, from under her screen, she saw two figures sauntering on the opposite side of the river, and her heart jumped to the conclusion that they were Cecil and Frank. The man was partly concealed from her by Cecil's floating draperies and Cecil's sun-shade, but he sauntered by Cecil's side as only a lover would saunter. He turned his head to her now and again, as only a lover would turn it.

She would not be a coward; she would not rise up and flee from before that loving pair. They might see her if they liked to rouse themselves from their absorption in each other and look across the stream. So she sat on whipping the stream, with balls of fire dancing before her eyes, and such a longing for the morrow in her heart!

Presently the airy draperies ceased to flutter in the wind, the slow stroll that suggested such

a love of lingering together on the part of the strollers ceased, and Horatia's unwilling eyes saw Cecil place herself on a piece of the high, broken bank, and rest her arm upon her companion's shoulder; and as she did so he bent his head and met her upturned face, and kissed her, unrebuked, with a privileged lover's easy assurance. And as he raised his head again and looked across the stream, Horatia saw that it was not Frank Stapylton.

Then rose such a storm of wrathful indignation in her heart that the man she loved so well should be so lightly, shamefully betrayed by the woman he loved—such a storm of feeling, such a tempest of conflicting emotions, such a passionate despair as the conviction of her own peculiar inability to set the matter straight came home upon her.

She, nourishing such feelings as she did herself about him in her heart, could not go to him with the tale of Cecil's toying with another man. Even he, knowing her as he did (every woman in love flatters herself with the delusion that the object really understands her), even he might misconstrue her motives, and imagine that she was vainly hoping to catch his heart in the rebound. She could not tell him of it, but she would get away from the sight of such hideous perfidy.

So she rose, collecting her tackle, and making a slight, unintentional gurgle in the water by means of some big pieces of decayed bark which she knocked off the fallen tree. And as she did so they looked across and saw her, and knew that they themselves were seen.

"It was only a kiss; why worry yourself about it? It was only a kiss, and you have given me many, darling. Surely you're not going to regret them?"

"But she will go and tell of it; it will be just like her to tell," Cecil said, plaintively. "It's just what a mean, jealous thing like she is would do. I am sure I would never tell if I saw a dozen men kissing her. She'd be welcome to it. But she will make mischief."

"But she can't make mischief," Danvers said. "Your delicacy exaggerates every thing. What mischief can be made by the fact getting about (even if it does get about) that the man you're going to marry kissed you? You're not ashamed of your love for me, are you, darling?"

"Ashamed! No. But, Charlie, I'm so cruelly hampered," she whispered. "You don't know what I have to go through—what pressure is put upon me. Frank Stapylton thinks I'm going to marry him."





CHAPTER XIX.

DOUBLY FALSE.

NERVOUSLY, in her haste to avoid a repetition of the sight that had hurt and shocked her for Frank's sake, Mrs. Arthur Waldron stumbled and slipped now and again as she mounted the rugged bank of the river. She was encumbered with her rod and tackle; she was enfeebled by the fact of the light summer dress she wore perpetually catching in some jagged knoll and pulling her back; she was harassed by the consciousness that the pair on the other side of the river were watching her progress; but, above all, she was burdened by the knowledge she had of having witnessed that with which Frank Stapylton ought to be made acquainted, and the feeling that it would be impossible for her to tell him of it.

It had been a terrible trial to her that she should thus have played the part of unintentional spy on the dubious actions of a pair whom she thoroughly disliked and heartily despised. To a generous nature there must always be a large amount of pain in getting the advantage of an adversary by chance. She felt supremely disgusted with Cecil for her perfidy; but, at the same time, she felt a good deal of soft pity for the pangs of humiliation which she imagined Cecil must be enduring on account of having been found out. That Cecil was not enduring them is not at all to the purpose. Horatia went through just as much vicarious suffering as if Cecil had been a better woman.

It seemed such a tedious, long, never-ending ascent, that from the river brink to the level road through the wood; and yet she was only two or three minutes in making it. But the knowledge of being watched and disliked for having existed at this juncture on this spot, and of being regarded as altogether a superfluity in the great scheme of humanity by the pair opposite, acted like a clog on her feet. She seemed to herself to be walking as one walks

in a dream, to be making strenuous efforts to get on, that were rendered null and void by nothing in particular; and every thing became more perplexing, dream-like, and bewildering still, when, on turning into the deep shadow of the wood, she found herself face to face with Frank Stapylton.

He was walking slowly, but there was something in his gait, slow as it was, that told of impatience, and a vexed anxiety to get over or go through with something. He was kicking the rich, streaming summer grasses that grew in his path, and switching off the foliage that hung down about him motionless in the soft midsummer air. There was on his face both flush and frown; there was angry light in his eyes, and this light did not die out when he lifted them and saw Horatia.

In her vivid remembrance of the scene she had just witnessed, she felt like a guilty creature before him as he paused and said to her,

"The woods seem to be the favorite haunt to-day. Cecil promised to meet me here an hour ago, but she has forgotten her promise, or missed the trysting-place. Which is it, do you think?"

With her face burning, with her heart beating unequally, with her whole frame quivering with indignation at her own falseness and Cecil's folly, she answered,

"It is so easy to be unpunctual in these woods at this season. I meant to be at home an hour ago, and see, here I am still."

He looked at her steadily as she spoke, with a look he had never given her before—a look of such interrogation and of such command that she absolutely winced under it.

"You know very well," he said, quietly, "that if you had promised to meet me here—me or any one else—you would have been here; you wouldn't have gone off for a walk

with—or without—any one else. You would have been here."

For one moment she tried to nerve herself to the task of telling this man that he was being betrayed, cajoled, befooled. But she could not do it. The dread of misapprehension, the fear of being malicious, the horror of being treacherous, in seeming even, to one of her own sex—all these feelings were too strong for her to wrestle with them successfully. She could only be silent—and sorry for him.

"My time here is nearly run out," she said, trying to shift the subject. "I go away to-morrow, and always at the last hour there are so many things to be done; so I shall say good-bye to you now, Frank; and I hope I shall hear of you soon as married and happy."

It was a courageous thing to say, and she said it courageously. Let us hope and pray that our daughters may never be called upon to utter similar words to the men they love—for after it, the utterance of every other lie is an easy thing.

He took the hand she held out to him, and retained it—but not lovingly, no one need be shocked—retained it severely almost, as he said,

"What is it? Your eyes don't deceive, you see; one can look right through them into your soul. You're keeping something from me. What is it?"

"What is it?" she said, evasively. "False emotional folly, I think, about leaving Larpington, and its woods and associations. Do let me be sorry without asking why, Frank. I have so many things to think about, you know. Railway traveling may upset my children, and my chairs and tables may all be smashed to pieces in the transit. When Cecil and you come to see me in London, you'll find me much more at my ease."

He flung her hand from him, and leaned back against a tree, while he lighted a cigar in the convulsive way in which men do light cigars occasionally, when the conviction is brought home to them that there's "nothing new and nothing true."

"Don't try to humbug me. You have seen Cecil?"

She felt her cheeks grow scarlet as he spoke, looking at her the while with that glance of keen interrogation under which she found it so difficult a matter to stand at ease and look as though she had a clear conscience.

"You have seen Cecil!" he repeated; and this time there was no interrogation in his

tone; there was confident, rather angry assertion only.

"Yes; I have seen her, but I have not seen her to speak to her," she answered, hurriedly. "Now, Frank, you must let me go home. Do be pitiful, and think of all my traveling trials to-morrow."

"And you know the cause of her not being here to meet me as she promised?"

"I have told you that I have not seen her to speak to," she answered, impatiently; and then he melted her to softest pity by shaking his head mournfully, and saying,

"There is no need to speak to her; you saw the cause, and so did I. Don't you try to throw dust in my eyes. That fellow is with her—making love to her!"

There was bitter denunciation of Mr. Danvers and his conduct in Frank's tone and manner, and the conviction that he was a trifle unjust smote her. For if ever a man could plead in extenuation of an offense, "It was the woman tempted me," Mr. Danvers might plead this with respect to Cecil Waldron.

"Perhaps he is not altogether to blame," she said; "he may not know that Cecil is engaged to you, and you ought to understand, better than any one else, how very strong the temptation to love her must be."

"I don't understand a woman promising to marry one fellow, and fooling with another, and I don't understand a man with any sense of honor making love to another man's promised wife. You know they're wrong all round; you must know it, though you won't admit it to me."

"And you know, though perhaps you won't even admit it to yourself, that you would feel very indignant with me if I even censured Cecil by implication," she said, promptly. "No, no, Frank; she is too dear to you and too near to you for any other woman's opinion to come between you with impunity to that other woman."

"If that were quite true I should not be listening here now, while Cecil is improving the shining hours over yonder with Danvers. No; the fact is, she was very dear to me, but she has nearly cured me; and if she will only ask for her liberty, she shall have it without a word of reproach from me."

"It would be giving her what she would not value, and leaving you poor indeed."

"It would be leaving me a richer man than I shall be if she does eventually bestow herself upon me," he replied, bitterly. "You know well enough that a man isn't easily blinded after the sight we have seen to-day."

And she thought, "Oh, fool that I am, to fancy he is cured of the folly of loving in the wrong place, any more than I am myself! Though his eyes have been opened to-day, he will trust her again and again, as blindly as ever—for, ah me! she has a lovely face."

Even as she thought it, Cecil advanced gayly into their midst, walking freely and prettily, as though not a single doubt fettered her footsteps; and by her side was the companion of her idyllic stroll, Mr. Danvers.

It is hard, after a man has just been described as occupying an ignominious position, to think of him as any other than ignominious in character and aspect. Unquestionably Mr. Danvers had, according to the judgment of Mrs. Arthur Waldron and Frank Stapylton, been playing a mean and dubious, not to say false and unpardonable part. He had been making warm love to the woman who was the promised wife of another man, and who, according to all the sacred laws of honor, ought to have been held sacred to that other man. Looked at from this point of view, his conduct admitted of no excuse. There were no extenuating circumstances about it; it was altogether vain and unprofitable; it was altogether bad.

But there was a reverse to this bold, brazen shield, on which his conduct was blazoned unblushingly. His worst folly, in reality, was that he believed in the woman by his side; his worst sin was his utter surrender of all his judgment and his will to her caprices; his only fault in the matter was his ignorance of the relations that existed between Frank Stapylton and Cecil Waldron.

The love of deceiving is the dominant element in the natures of some women. If their paths lie straight before them, they shrink from following those paths, and seek out the tortuous and the winding ways by preference. Cecil had no love for Mr. Danvers; he did not even interest her greatly; but, for the sake of keeping him in her thrall, she was freely false to him about the man to whom she was engaged; she made light, contemptuous mention of Frank's devotion to her; she implied that it bored her; she insinuated that she had rejected his proffered love, and that it was only the blindest, maddest, most persistent infatuation which kept him in her path still. And all the time she meant to marry Frank Stapylton, and meant to let Mr. Danvers drift whithersoever fate willed that he should drift.

She was staggered for a moment when she found herself face to face with Frank, but it was only for a moment that her vanity-flushed face

changed in hue, and her purpose faltered. She was certainly an able woman in this matter of wriggling herself out of a difficulty. That moment passed, and she was portraying light, loving displeasure at meeting Frank with Mrs. Arthur Waldron.

"It was a fortunate thing that I had some one to speak to, Mr. Stapylton," she said, "while I was waiting all this weary time for you. You, it seems, had forgotten your appointment."

"His appointment! Oh, Cecil, you didn't expect him, did you?" Danvers whispered.

"Hush! and don't call me Cecil," she took an opportunity of muttering, as Horatia was shaking hands with, and saying good-bye to, Frank Stapylton once more. Then she turned to her sister-in-law.

"It's quite a pleasant surprise to see you again, Mrs. Arthur. I thought you had left this morning. Did you want to watch unseen over any of your friends, that you struck a premature note of departure?"

All this time Frank had not spoken, but there was more than the shadow of the suspicion of a taunt in Cecil's last word, and he answered her coldly,

"I can answer for it, Mrs. Arthur Waldron wouldn't watch unseen over the meanest creature on earth, with the idea of bringing confusion on that mean creature's head." And Danvers telegraphed an inquiry with his eyes to Cecil as to whether she meant to put up with that?

She had every trick at command wherewith to deceive any number of her fellow-creatures who were in any degree better, truer, and more loyal than she was herself; she had every trick at command, and she could use all tricks at any given moment. Credit her with wonderful adaptability. She could look as mournfully pathetic as a monkey, whenever she thought that by so looking she might possibly serve her own interests. So she looked her most mournfully pathetic now—looked it at each man quickly, spasmodically, cleverly, until each man believed in her again, as all his own in her heart—until each man distrusted the other out of all bounds of reason, and was ready to trust her again to his own destruction; and each man was ready to blame the other for so trusting; and each one would have witheringly blamed the other had he expressed or entertained hard thoughts of her. In short, each one was bewitched for the time being, and so ready to have his feelings tinged by any color she chose to throw over her proceedings.

"At any rate, either seen or unseen, I shall watch over Larpington no longer, for I really go to-morrow morning, Cecil, and so good-bye to you all." And thus at last Horatia got herself away from their midst, and hoped heartily, as she walked away, that she had "done with them" and with their distracting influences "forever."

At least, she conscientiously and honestly hoped this for a brief period; and after this brief period—it was a very brief one—she began to conjecture which of the two men Cecil really loved, and which she would make really happy eventually, and which, by losing Cecil, would be the winner; and, in fact, generally to vex her own soul, as does a woman most surely who ever makes the mistake of taking too much interest about any of her fellow-creatures.

And so the hours came and went, finding her and leaving her in perplexity, until the time came for her to start and enter upon the new life in the new London home she had chosen, far from all those who had entangled themselves about her path, and whom she could not hate for so doing. And even as she traveled away from it all, to the monotonous buzzing and whirring of the train the words set themselves, "How will it end? how will it end?"

A cleverer woman than Cecil might have been excused for finding it difficult to discover and take a safe and pleasant path out of this maze into which she had wandered; but she was equal to the call that was made upon her powers of strategy and diplomacy. Calmly, as soon as Horatia left them, did Cecil place herself between the two men, and addressing Mr. Danvers, who looked the more warmly angry of the two, said,

"Now that we have been fortunate enough to meet, Mr. Stapylton, we may as well all three of us walk back to that lovely river. It's like a bit of fairy-land. You must come and enjoy it with me, Frank."

She dropped her voice to a mere murmur as she pronounced his name with a falteringly tender accent; and for the moment he was carried away against his reason into the folly of believing that she felt what she was seeming to feel. Still, it had not been in the bond that he was to meet Danvers in the wood, and that Danvers should mount guard over the interview. It was altogether ridiculous and incongruous; it was altogether unjust and heartless of Cecil; it was a thing against which it behooved him to make a stand.

"Probably Mr. Danvers has had enough

of the bank of the river for one day. Why should we take him back there?"

We! It was identifying himself with her in a way that was as the root of bitterness to poor Danvers. We! How could Cecil, whom he looked upon as his own—Cecil, who had let him kiss her on the lips only just now—Cecil, who had been sweetly protesting to him that she was more than indifferent to Frank Stapylton—how could she permit Stapylton to link himself together with her in this way unrebuked? He waited for a moment, and then, as Cecil did not rebuke the bold imputation of an alliance, Danvers took the matter of chastisement into his own hands.

"It seems to me that it's rather the other way," he said; "I'm entirely at Mrs. Waldron's orders for the day—and forever, as far as that goes. We needn't take you out of the way to go to the river—"

"Oh, hush! hush!" she interrupted; and she was at her sweetest and prettiest as she said it. "Here am I monopolizing you both so selfishly, and I'm sure I hear something—a cry just as if somebody were calling out. Oh, listen! Don't you think it's Horatia, Frank? What can have happened?"

They did not hear any thing, these men whom she addressed; but how could they realize this unimportant fact when she was addressing them in accents of panting anxiety? She was startled, anxious, miserable apparently about that other woman who had just quitted them. What could they be but startled and anxious too?

"Hush! hush!" she kept on saying in her overwhelming manner. "Perhaps she has slipped into the river—the bank is so apt to crumble. I feel sure it's that. Do run and see."

She addressed Frank; and though he felt convinced that Horatia had not been guilty of the folly of slipping into the river, nor of doing any thing else that was melodramatic and awkward, still he felt himself bound to go off on his vague mission, and set the fictitious fears of his liege lady at rest. But even as he went, he had upon him the stinging sense of being befooled by her. "For some reason or other, she wants to get rid of me, and her *ruse* is so contemptibly transparent," he thought. Still he walked on, and Cecil had the opportunity she wanted.

"Charlie, you must put up with Mr. Stapylton's manner," she began, imploringly. "I haven't had the courage to tell you before,

but really he has some reason for assuming it."

"You don't mean to tell me, you can't wish me to believe that you have been giving him encouragement?" Danvers asked, reproachfully. And then she gave him a pretty effective garbled version of the state of the case.

"He pressed me hard when I was getting better, you know, and he had been so kind! It was through him that I was found and taken away from those dreadful women whose cruelty drove me out of my mind; and then he had loved me for so many years, and I was so weak and so afraid of every body, that I really hadn't the courage to refuse him."

"You don't mean that you're engaged to him?"

"Well, I have promised to marry him."

"Oh, Cecil, this is not fair to me. You must tell him at once how things are with us. I will not have my promised wife placed for another hour in such a dubious position."

"But I'm his promised wife too," she whimpered. "How cruel every one is! I believe, between you, you will drive me mad again. I believe it's what you want to do. How can you, Charlie? And you pretend to be so fond of me!"

He felt that it was a feeble-minded thing on his part to do, but he actually at this attempted to reason with her.

"My darling, should I be fond of you if I could tamely allow this order of things to exist an hour longer?"

"But it must exist an hour longer, and a good many hours longer, unless you want to kill me. I must break it to him by degrees. Oh, why won't you let me do it my own way, comfortably?"

"Our ideas of comfort don't coincide at all, Cecil. You must promise me that you won't let him harbor this delusion an hour longer, or I shall think that your vows and protestations to me have been false as the devil."

"And when I tell him he will say just the same things—just the same cruel things," Cecil

murmured, with an air of large appeal against the injustice of it all. "He's gone off now as jealous as he can be, I can see it."

"But he has no right to be jealous," Danvers persisted. "If he wrung an unwilling assent from you when you were ill, it was a mean and cowardly thing of him to do; it was taking advantage of your gratitude and gentle womanly feeling in a way that makes me think not too highly of him. The thing is simple enough. Tell him you find you can't marry him, as you love me. You *do* love me, don't you, Cecil?"

Cecil was prompt with assurances to the effect of his being "the only man she had ever loved." Her feeling for "poor George" had been something quite different. She rather thought it had been respect which she had felt for the husband of her youth.

"Well, then, will you promise me to clear the matter up with Stapylton to-day? You must promise me this. You shall promise me—you will promise me if you love me."

Frank Stapylton was coming toward them again; she had no time to lose, and as her one object was to get out of the difficulty for the present, she gave him the promise he asked for, and gave it fervently.

"Your mind may be relieved, Cecil," Frank Stapylton said, carelessly, as he rejoined them; "Mrs. Arthur Waldron has not fallen into the river, nor has she fallen a prey to any of the wild beasts with which you seemed suddenly to think these woods are infested."

"I'm very glad. Still, I'm sure I heard something; and it was so good and kind of you to go. I'm tired, and must go home now. Shall I say good-bye to you here, or will you walk up to the house with me?"

Both men declared their intention of walking back to the house with her; but at the door Mr. Danvers took his leave. "I shall see you to-morrow," he said to Cecil, and Frank writhed under the glance that accompanied the words. Then they went in together, and Frank commenced at once.

"Cecil, what does all this mean? Be frank with me, if you can."





CHAPTER XX.

A NET IS SPREAD FOR GILBERT.

"**B**E frank with me, if you can," Frank said; and the fact of his saying it at all is conclusive evidence that he had utterly failed in gauging the depths of his future-wife's character. It was not in Cecil's power to be frank with any human being, if by being frank she ran the risk of plunging herself into even the slightest temporary trouble. She infinitely preferred uttering an easy lie. The lie might or might not gain credence from the one for whom it was designed, but, at any rate, it rarely failed to stop conversation on the disagreeable point. The game was well worth the candle, in her estimation. What, indeed, did a lie more or less matter to a woman who habitually uttered them.

So now, when Frank Stapylton made the plea that was reasonable enough in seeming, and ridiculously wild in fact, she weaved a romance on the spot.

"I hardly understand it myself, Frank. Mr. Danvers has something on his mind, I'm afraid, and I think that he wants to tell me about it. Do you know, I can't help associating it with Mrs. Arthur Waldron, your immaculate Horatia. He turned quite pale to-day when he caught sight of her first, and his manner changed from that time—quite changed, I assure you."

"I don't wonder at that," he was beginning, coldly, when she interrupted him tremulously.

"Frank, I wish you would not assume that air of mysterious annoyance. You are ready enough to talk about my brain, and to imply that every suggestion I make is the emanation of an unhealthy brain. I wish you would bear in mind what that poor brain has endured, and not torture it by suspense and an air of mystery."

"I won't keep you in suspense, and there

shall be no mystery in my dealings with you, at any rate, Cecil," he said, more gently than he had hitherto spoken. "I don't like double-dealing. I dislike it so much, that I will tell you without hesitation that which it hurts me horribly to think about, much more to speak about. What can your feelings for me be, what can your thoughts of me be, when you can permit another man to kiss you?"

He asked it with a choking spasm in his throat—a spasm of righteous wrath and indignation, and outraged, jealous feeling. And she answered him with an irritating calmness that did credit to her powers of artistic duplicity.

"Then Mrs. Arthur Waldron has, as I imagined she would, magnified and distorted an accident into an act of disloyalty to you—"

"Stop!" he said, passionately. "I saw it myself."

"If you go into a rage and rave at me, it's quite impossible for me to give you the explanation," she answered, carelessly. "I must submit, I suppose, to a piece of broad and coarse injustice because you are too intemperate, and too much under the influence of a woman who dislikes me, to allow me to justify myself. I may look forward to a happy life indeed, if the rule is to be established that I am to submit to all accusations in silence."

"I can't endure the idea of putting a woman—a woman who had promised to be my wife—on her defense in such a matter. Why didn't you trust me, Cecil? Why didn't you tell me you had come to love this man better than you do me? I would not have held you to your promise; I would not have enforced my claim an instant after it ceased to be a claim to which you acceded with all your heart."

"Oh, what nonsense!" she cried, in accents of large-hearted impatience of the pettifoggery of his complaint. "I haven't come to

love Charles Danvers better than I do you; and I do accede to your claim with all my heart. Why should I be going to marry you if I didn't love you? Shall I gain so much by the marriage, Mr. Stapylton, that it would be worth my while to make myself miserable and take you, if it would make me happier to take Charlie Danvers?"

"All this only proves you an adept in the art of weaving spells," he said; "but they are magical for me no longer. No, Cecil"—she had risen up, and was standing with her hands on his shoulders, looking through his eyes into his soul with those wonderful violet eyes of hers, that were full of such witching—"no, Cecil; one of us two men—either Danvers or myself—must be made a fool of by you in this business. I will not be the one."

"You mean that you will break off our engagement—desert me—wrong me in your cowardice, in revenge for my rejection of you in our youth!"

"I mean nothing of the sort. I only mean to leave you free to go to the man you love," he said, sadly, for she was very pretty, and it was for the "last time," he told himself; and he was only a man, and it is horribly unpleasant for any man to have the conviction thrust home to him that he has been befooled.

And then he rose, and said "good-bye" to her rather falteringly, bidding "God bless her" as he went, though in his heart of hearts he felt that she did not deserve the benediction, and was not in the least likely to benefit by it; while she, strong in a purpose she had formed, stronger still in the perfect knowledge she had of her own perfect beauty, said farewell to him with prettily portrayed resignation. As she held his hand in a parting clasp, she slipped a ring, with the word "Mizpah" engraved upon it, on his finger. And he was deeply touched by the incident; for how was he to know that she had a small stock of them, and had touched Charlie Danvers's heart by exactly the same means a few hours before? His mind was in a sadly complicated state as he went home from the Cecil who had been his, and was his no longer, this day; for, though he had arrived at a curing knowledge of some of her weaknesses, he had also arrived at a most consoling knowledge of his own.

An hour after he had left her, Cecil was at the Bridge House, sitting on a rolled-up bundle of carpet that was, in the present disorganized state of affairs, the only moderately comfortable seat in the drawing-room. She had come down nominally to take a last farewell of Hora-

tia; in reality, she had come to goad that unhappy woman into reinstating her (Cecil) into her empire over Frank Stapylton's soul.

It was rather an effective narrative, that which she told of the events of the day; but Horatia was not dazzled by it. It was rather a strong case, that which she made out of her love for Frank, and her longing that he should think well of her; but Horatia was not deceived into sympathy by it. It was a subtle stroke, that which she gave when she said,

"You are so clever that you could make him see the folly of his resolve in a minute, but—I can hardly expect you to do it."

"No," Horatia said, thinking of that kiss by the river-side; "you can hardly expect me to do it."

"For you're fond of him yourself," Cecil murmured, softly; "and it would be cruel, cruel, and what no woman with womanly feeling could do, to drag you in as intercessor between him and the one he loves. Oh, Horatia, what a pity for his own sake, poor boy, that he couldn't care for you! Your desperate devotion would have satisfied him; but he will always be craving for more from me."

It was a subtle stroke, and Horatia fell under it.

"I thought you said you had parted! What is the use, in that case, of thinking of what the effect might be of intercession for which you can not ask? Moreover, my influence with Mr. Stapylton is very slight, and could I use it after that scene between Mr. Danvers and you? I couldn't—I couldn't!"

"Nonsense, nonsense!" Cecil protested, warmly. "That scene, as you call it, was such an accident, it's cruel of you to aid in deepening the impression on Frank's mind; for I love him, and he adores me. He thinks Charlie Danvers kissed me; as if I would let any man but the one I'm going to marry do that! He was bending down to watch a trout, and I looked up suddenly, and I think my hat knocked against his, and all this harm, that may make the misery of my life, has been made of it! And you can't help me because you care for him yourself."

"Care for him! Yes, of course I care for him—so much that I'll do any thing to make him happy if I can, for he's like a brother to me," she added, feebly. And then Cecil submitted a plan of reconciliation to her which was very beautiful in itself, if Frank could only be made to believe in its perfect integrity. And, spurred on by a dread which she dared not analyze, Horatia wrote a fervent ap-

peal on behalf of Cecil and Cecil's pitifully helpless and besieged condition to Frank Stapylton.

"He knows what I am," Cecil whimpered. "He knows that I can't bear to be rough, and rude, and repulse people. I'm too grateful to them for being kind to me; and so, because I can't be false to my nature—the nature he pretended not so very long ago, he fell in love with—he's going to make me a by-word and a scorn here, where I have been dragged through the mud already; and, of course, I ought to bear it all in silence, because it's cruel of me to speak about it to you."

"No, it's not, it's natural; and I'm very glad that you do," Horatia answered, stung into mendacity, and chilled into coolness, "as Frank's friend and—a—yours. Don't you see I'm ready to do all in my power to remove the impression that you assure me is false?"

"Of course it is," Cecil cried, eagerly. "Can't you see—doesn't your own reason tell you that it's all a mistake? Frank is the only man I have ever really loved; but he must not presume upon that fact; he must make some concession to show me that he cares as much for me as I do for him. I shall have been utterly deceived in his character, and you have helped to deceive me, if he does not do this."

"I can have had no motive in deceiving you," Mrs. Arthur Waldron said. "Heaven knows, I don't think that a marriage with you must prove such a blessing to a man that I should descend to a subterfuge in order to bring it about between you and a friend I cared for."

"No; that's it," Cecil answered, whirling lightly round in her argument. "You care for him so much that, even at the cost of his own happiness, you would keep him to yourself, wouldn't you? I often think that he likes you best; he says himself his feeling of liking for you is very strong—only, you see, his feeling for me is stronger. It's a pity he ever saw me; he might have been contented with you if he hadn't, and so happy! Don't I trust you entirely? I can't do any thing deceitful; it's not my nature. I know you care for him, and yet I come and tell you every thing, I trust you so."

So she prattled on; and how grateful Mrs. Arthur Waldron was for the honor done to her by the fact of the prattler reposing such a full meed of confidence in her, may be better imagined than described. At any rate, as has been told, the forces brought to bear upon her by the weaker woman were sufficiently strong to induce her to use every agency she had at command for the furtherance of that weaker

woman's wishes; and still she knew the whole time that there would be destruction for him in Cecil's love, and the possibility of a glorious salvation for him in her own, if it could ever be gratified; but that possibility was out of the question, and she knew herself to be an utter fool for even contemplating it.

But then, unluckily (in spite of all that reviewers may say—and they say a great many pungent things on the subject), women, and very nice and respectable women too, are utter fools, and will continue to be utter fools as long as the world lasts. Accordingly, though she wrote the letter that was designed and destined to deprecate Frank's wrath against Cecil, she disliked writing it, and revolted against her part of dove with the olive branch with all the force of revolt that there was in her delicate nature against an utterly repugnant task.

In due time he received her letter; and his heart, or rather his taste, added to his jealous desire of possession, being already well inclined toward the woman whose cause was advocated in that letter, he prepared to make concession to Cecil, and under certain conditions to claim her as his own again. "But she must give up fooling Danvers," he told himself. With pardonable short-sightedness, he preferred to see things as he found it pleasant to see them. With a pardonable craving to give a euphemistic reading of the fact, he preferred calling it Cecil's "fooling Danvers" to "Cecil's fooling *with* Danvers." But in the inmost recesses of his heart he knew that he was paltering with the truth.

Horatia's letter gave him some grounds to go upon; and he was very glad to venture upon those grounds at once. He told himself that Horatia was a clever, true, keen-sighted woman—a woman who was quite as much his friend as Cecil's—rather more his friend than Cecil's, in fact, and so not at all likely to be prejudiced in favor of that faulty but bewitching person. It behooved him to pay attention to Horatia's arguments, therefore, and to soften his heart to her appeal on behalf of that sister-woman of hers whom she (Horatia) despised, and disliked, and distrusted. Cecil's cause must be very good indeed, he argued, when even her rival became her special counsel and pleader.

That she had conquered them both by subtlety—and by subtlety in which there was a strong element of cruelty, was a truth which Cecil did not attempt for an instant to deny to herself, when Frank presented himself before her in an obedient sort of way, that made her

comprehend that he did it partially at the bidding of her cat's-paw Horatia; and at the same time, though she was proud of her subtle conquest, she hated them both for showing her that they had been made subservient to her will through their liking for each other—through that, and not through the blind and mad devotion to herself which she desired to develop on all sides.

We all know that a relapse is very much worse than an original attack. Frank bent lower, crawled more abjectly, wore his blue ribbon more openly in the eyes of all men for a little after that coming back to Cecil in which Horatia had been mainly instrumental. Nevertheless, though he did these things, he disliked doing them, and she dived to the very bottom of that dislike, and knew that it had its source in a sense of her unworthiness. "And he has gained his knowledge of that through another," she told herself bitterly, and in idiomatic English she promised herself that he "should smart for it." For though he bent lower, and crawled abjectly, and let her lead him along, the day of his credulity was over, and the faith he had had in her had fallen away forever.

"Come and keep my house, dear," Gilbert Denham had said to his sister one day when she had summoned him to her lodgings, in order to consult him about her future residence. "Come and keep my house, dear, until you can find one you like better. Mine is a very lonely life, Horry; you and your children will make it much pleasanter, and keep me from going to the dogs."

"You'll never do that, Gilbert?" his sister had asked, anxiously; for in spite of her loving predisposition to believe her brother incapable of erring deeply—or at all, in fact—she could not help seeing that there were lines in his face which time had not traced, and shadows in his eyes which had not been deepened by Bessie's death.

"Well, I don't know," he answered; "I have had one or two hard knocks lately; and whether a fellow has any heart or not, he has something within him that gets sore and hardened. You had better come and look after me."

She felt that he meant them when he said these words; and as she believed in him, and in herself, and in her power over him, she accepted this invitation, and put herself to the extreme misery of trying to regulate the conduct of her riotous children in another person's house; not that Gilbert ever pointed this mis-

ery for her; he appeared to be utterly oblivious of whether the children made a noise or not. But his housekeeper had nerves, and disliked intruders, and was altogether very severe in her master's service.

One day, when this latter fact had been brought very prominently before Horatia for many hours, she pondered over it deeply, and the result of her pondering was that she said to her brother after dinner,

"Gilbert, I can't help hoping that in time you will marry again. I shall rejoice when you say to me you have seen a woman you can love."

"I have seen one already," he said.

"Where?" She could not control the quick, conscious anxiety which manifested itself in that one word.

"At Larpington, last Christmas. Probably you'll think me a fool for it, or for confessing it; but the fact is, I was more interested in Mrs. Waldron than I have ever been in any woman I've ever seen."

"And she's so unworthy of interest, or love, or any thing of the sort," Horatia said, emphatically; and then she went on to tell her brother a few episodes in the life of the beautiful Cecil since she had recovered her senses.

"Such conduct is enough to cure any man of even liking her, isn't it, Gilbert?" she asked, injudiciously, like a woman.

And like a man he agreed with her that such "conduct was enough to cure any man;" but he felt within himself, at the same time, that it had not cured him.

"Neither of those fellows can hold her. How should they be able to do it?" he asked himself, contemptuously; and he flattered himself into the belief that she would have behaved very differently if he could have won her before Frank Stapylton had intervened.

There was a dead calm for the brother and sister for a month or two, during which time they grew very closely to one another, and sympathized about every thing but the interests that were dearest to each in life, namely, her love for Frank, and his for Cecil. Of course, the brother thought the sister foolish for entertaining any thing like gentle feelings toward a man who had been guilty of the despicable act of cutting him (the brother) out; while as for Horatia, she could only excuse Gilbert's infatuation by saying to herself,

"But if she could beguile Frank, it's only natural that other men should fall a prey to her."

But the end of the period of quiet came,

most unexpectedly. Disturbed and startled by the commencement of a letter she received one morning by the early post, she forthwith instantly disturbed and startled her brother, before she had mastered its contents.

"Oh, Gilbert, how can they do it? I hear from Cecil that they are going to be married directly almost, and are coming here."

"Coming here!" he repeated after her; and his bronzed face grew pale with the chalky pallor which is so unpleasant to witness. "How *he* loves the lovely fool, too!" his sister thought, bitterly.

"Yes; stop a minute, though. No; she wants to come here (heartless of her!) before she's married, that I may help her to get her *trousseau*, Gilbert. I won't have her, don't fear."

Does the man live who ever voluntarily puts himself out of temptation, I wonder? His heart beat with the quick pulsations of a most foolish joy, as he heard and answered,

"Not have her here! Why not, Horry? Where should she go, poor girl, but to you at such a time as this? Let her come here, of course. I'll welcome her, gladly."

"But, Gilbert, he'll come to see her, you know," Horatia explained; "and it will be so uncomfortable, for we shall be called upon to help to adjust the differences that are sure to arise between such a fool as Cecil is, and any man who is unhappy enough to like her."

"I call that a most unwomanly sentiment," Gilbert said, hotly, perfectly unconscious of the fact of its being the most womanly sentiment to which his sister could have given vent. "You can easily make him understand that it will be rather bad form his coming here—much

—while she's here with us; and—and—Horry, make her as happy as you can, won't you?"

"Oh, you deluded mortal!" Horatia thought, shaking her head pitifully as he went out of the room, after administering this wholesome rebuke to her; "why can't you see her as even Frank sees her? Make her as happy as I can, you say! She will make herself happy, or unhappy, as it pleases her. Why, she would stand on my throat and suffocate me at any given moment, if it made her a prettier height in the eyes of men."

But though this was her private opinion, she refrained from expressing it openly; and so, when Cecil arrived, she had such a reception as satisfied all her delicate tastes and requirements. And at dinner that day she arrived, for the first time, at a knowledge of what a distinguished-looking man Horatia's brother was.

The insatiable creature began lamenting at once that she had not "made more of Horatia" in the old days at Larpington. "She would have been so useful to me now," she thought. "Frank is not here, and there's no one else in the way. Why, if I had only managed properly, I might have got up quite fraternal terms with Gilbert Denham. Well, my *trousseau* won't be got in a hurry, that is certain."

She spoke the prologue to the comedy she intended to act that same night. Lounging back among the cushions of a stout, comfortable sofa, her beautiful, supple form, robed in soft-colored maize silk, only a tone or two less golden than her hair, she looked such a perfectly harmonious creature, that he would have been more or less than man if he had resisted her invitation to come and "fun away her headache."





CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHAIN GROWS LOOSE IN EVERY LINK.

"DO you believe in suddenly-formed friendships?" Cecil began, holding her face up caressingly toward the fan which he was waving before her. "I do. I know at once, directly I see a person, if I shall like that person, and if he is worthy to be liked. I felt that I could trust you the instant I saw you. What did you feel when you first saw me?"

It was a difficult question to answer at all. It was impossible to answer it truthfully. Had Gilbert Denham been veracious at this moment, he would have been guilty of perfidy toward the absent Frank. Accordingly, he took refuge in that poor, weak sanctuary, evasion.

"I'm not good at defining passing impressions," he said, as coolly as he could, with those intensely violet eyes bent beseechingly upon him; "and I am not a woman, and do not arrive at things by intuition. You're quite right, though, in feeling that you can trust me; you may, thoroughly."

"I have never had a friend before," she murmured, plaintively. "Girlish alliances mean nothing, do they? Then I married young, and after that—" She paused, and filled the silence with a sigh.

"I should have thought, to quote the old song, that

"Friends in all the aged you'd meet,
And lovers in the young."

He tried to say it with that air of light, affected gallantry which invariably fails to touch a sensitive woman, and he could not succeed in his attempt. He said it, instead, with that thrill of truth in his tone which goes home, as only truth can, to the heart of even a shallow nature such as Cecil's.

"Shorn of his strength already," she thought, delightedly; and she bent her head down lower, and seemed to blush. The woman to whose cheeks vanity drives the blood al-

ways get the credit for being possessed by a sweeter spirit of modesty than those are accredited with who only blush from love.

"Shorn of his strength already!" the beautiful, mediocre-minded, modern Delilah thought; and then she glanced at his sister sitting by, and saw that his sister looked contemptuously displeased, and went on her way rejoicing.

"Lovers, for some reason or other, I have had in abundance, but never a real friend such as you'll be to me, Mr. Denham. Any number of men have professed to like me, but I have always been ready, too ready, to distrust them. Now, you don't even profess to like me; but you do, don't you? Yes; I feel that you do."

"Not like her! In Heaven's name, what would she have me say?" he asked himself. "With her honest, sweet nature, she can never wish to wrest idle confessions from a man that will pain him in the making, and merely win absolution from her." Then he went on attributing many beautifully refined feelings to her which she did not possess; not speaking his thoughts aloud—had he done so, the mere wording of the belief might have shown him that his faith was not founded on a rock—but letting himself think it until he loved the thought that did her honor.

Through all time, probably, this great problem will remain unsolved: Why will men go on giving their worthiest affections to the unworthiest objects that are thrown in their way? Propinquity has a great deal to do with it; but the fact of its being an element in the affair does not solve the question satisfactorily. We can only leave it as we find it. Since the world began, worth has failed to win the best love of either man or woman.

Some of these thoughts rushed through Horatia Waldron's mind as she sat silently watching the graceful spider weaving her web, and

the honest, foolish, deluded fly fluttering toward it. Her feminine instincts told her that Cecil was resolved upon winning a declaration of love from Gilbert Denham; that she was determined to have his scalp; that she felt her power, and meant to have it. But more than this, Horatia's feminine instincts failed to tell her. In Cecil's suddenly-born desire to conquer Gilbert, Gilbert's sister could not clearly read a motive that might even partially justify the woman who seemed to feign to love all she looked on. "If she is weary of Frank, she must be as devoid of feeling as she is of sense," Mrs. Arthur Waldron thought; and though she sighed to see Frank free, she revolted indignantly at the possibility of his gaining his freedom through another woman's non-appreciation of him.

Presently she spoke, being determined, even at the cost of a pang to herself, to recall Cecil to a sense of decent remembrance of Frank.

"When will Mr. Stapylton be here, Cecil? Do you expect him to-morrow?"

"To-morrow! Good gracious, no!" Cecil answered, with pettish emphasis. "What a bore he would develop into after we were married, if he followed me up so closely now! I didn't ask him when he was coming; but I don't expect him for a week, at least."

"Certainty strikes the death-blow to sentiment very often, I have heard," Horatia said, coldly.

"Sentiment!" Cecil echoed, half contemptuously. "There never has been any sentiment in my feeling for Frank. He's a good fellow and a clever fellow, and he has been faithful to me for so many years; but when you talk of sentiment, you talk of something I don't feel for him."

She roused herself up to say this, directing lightning glances toward Gilbert as she said it. And Gilbert ("men are such fools in such matters," his sister thought) looked pleased.

"Stapylton's a happy fellow to have won your esteem," he said, awkwardly. "A man to whom that is rendered up freely is a man to be envied."

"And you, in ordinary matters, are so clear-sighted and sensible," Horatia thought. "But one look in her face blurs all your vision; one foolish, false sentence from her swamps all your common sense. Why doesn't your manliness revolt at the perfidy which is making her disparage her future husband to you?"

Poor, foolish questioner! As if the manliness of the manliest on earth ever revolted at light mention of a rival from the lips that he loved!

"And yet, when I think how cold life is without sentiment to warm it, I feel that poor Frank is to be pitied," she went on, vaingloriously. "Don't you agree with me, Horatia, in thinking—" She paused, for it dawned upon her that Horatia was gone, and that she was alone with Gilbert Denham.

A slight flush of excitement rose to her cheek. That he was weak about her already, she knew; but why should he not confess his weakness, and make her triumph complete?

"A poor triumph enough," it may be argued. Granted. A very, very poor triumph; but, then, a grand triumph can never be achieved by a mean nature. And, on the other hand, as all things are relative, it must be conceded that these feminine victories are not utterly despicable. They are evidences of our power, poor as they may be, and poor as our power may be. And when one considers how utterly powerless a woman becomes from the day of her marriage, who can marvel at her struggles to develop the attribute as fully as she can before she goes into bondage?

Doubtless there is a faint foreshadowing of the powerlessness that will be her portion, as soon as she has gained the hallowed name of wife, in every woman's heart. But on the girl's future the shadow is limned forth faintly and weakly. The touches are put in by intuition only, and are often obliterated by hope; but the woman who has been once married knows that though she may shut her eyes to the fact, the fact remains—the man she is going to marry will be her master, and according to the strength or the weakness of his nature will he display the mastery over her.

Cecil Waldron was essentially a non-reasoning creature; but she was a woman, and therefore had subtle intuitions which were usually correct. The wisest woman on earth could not have been more thoroughly convinced of the truth of the presentiment she had, that on the day of her marriage with Frank her wings would be clipped, than this will-o'-the-wisp-minde creature was; but being so thoroughly convinced of it, probably a wiser woman would have drawn back, even at the eleventh hour, had she objected to such clipping. Cecil had no definite intention of drawing back, but she determined to gather all the roses that grew about her path openly before her marriage, surreptitiously afterward.

Oh, the pity of it for honest-hearted Frank Stapylton! There was no protection for him in his own loyal nature against such a woman as this. The men who are fractiously jealous,

wearily masterful, bent on the exalted task of continually supervising and directing the footsteps of the woman they have vowed to trust—these men deserve to be deceived; and there is broad injustice in the fact that as a rule these are the men whose wives are far too good to deceive them; while the men who are too strong and too generous to make a woman feel that she has the bit in her mouth every minute reap the rich reward of their generosity and strength by getting such spouses as Cecil.

"I think," Cecil commenced, in touching accents of plaintive regret, as soon as the opportunity of solitude was given to her, "I think there must be something very bad about me, Mr. Denham—some strong taint of original sin, that good people detect and revolt from at once."

"Something bad!" he exclaimed, indignantly. "Don't pain me by being so horribly unjust to yourself, even in jest."

"But I am in earnest—in sad, terrible, bitter earnest." She had pre-arranged this speech, and was determined to utter it in season or out of season. "Your sister is a courteous woman generally, and quite a woman of the world; yet both her courtesy and her worldly tact give way when she sees any one she likes show any preference for me. She was hurt and angry about Frank Stapylton; now she is hurt and angry because she sees that I crave your friendship. And if she is right, how very, very wrong and bad I must be!"

She let a tear or two well up into her eyes at this juncture, and Gilbert felt that all his strength would be weakness soon unless he could get away. At the same moment he thought what a tight hand he would keep over this great enchantress should he ever be so blessed by fate as to have her for his own. Heaven knows she needed the curb enough, but so would he have decided on using it if she had been the quietest and straightest goer in the world. As it happened, she was incapable of discerning these conflicting sentiments. Had she done so, even she would have loathed the idea of the possibility of becoming the wife of a man who desired to marry a woman he degraded by suspecting.

"It is only the womanly dislike to seeing another preferred to herself that is influencing Horry's manner—if her manner is not what it ought to be toward you," he said, sacrificing his sister to his passion without compunction. "Do you crave for my friendship? I wish I could prove to your satisfaction that it was

yours to command as you liked, long before you even desired it."

"Ah! you can't tell how soon the desire for it was formed in my poor, weak mind," she said, with a charming humility that almost imposed upon him as real. "It has passed before me like a vision that your friendship was mine. Was the vision unreal?"

"I am afraid that Stapylton and you will find it a tedious reality. You'll be seeing a great deal more of me than you'll care to see," he said, in an affectedly light tone.

"I can't answer for him, but I can for myself," she said, in a low voice. And then she rose and said "good-night" to him, pleading fatigue as an excuse for retiring so early. She knew when to stop before satiety set in.

There was some light fencing gone through between the two widows this night before they parted. Cecil was gifted with the graceful, chameleon-like quality of changing her colors at any given moment; and so, as soon as she had left Gilbert, she developed a warm, roscate tint of satisfaction in the friendship of Gilbert's sister.

"Do come and talk to me in my room, Horatia," she pleaded, as she invaded Horatia in a pet sanctuary into which the latter had retired to commune with herself on the subject of the weakness of men—an inexhaustible subject, about which the less is said the better, I think. "Do come and talk to me in my room. It is such a comfort to me to have you and—your brother to rely upon at this time. You'll counsel me, won't you?"

"What about?" Horatia asked, briefly and coldly. And Cecil poisoned some arrow-tips before she shot them at the woman whose friendship she solicited.

"About my marriage. It's an awful thing, isn't it, for a perfectly open, straight-forward woman like myself to let a man suppose that I'm marrying him loving him as much as he does me, when I don't?"

"I should call it acting a lie; but don't be guided by me," Mrs. Arthur Waldron said, hastily.

"That's what I feel it to be; and yet he will break his heart if I break it off," Cecil answered, watching the effect of her own words keenly. "I wish—how I wish—he could have fallen in love with you instead."

"That being an utter impossibility, we will not discuss it," Horatia answered, in those stagnant tones which betray hopeless heart-pain, when hopeless heart-pain is felt. And then Cecil gave her sharpest thrust.

"Oh, Horatia, I see, I understand; and I can do nothing. I would give him up to you, and gladly, but he is so human, that he will not see what is best for him."

Imagine the feelings of the woman to whom this was said. Imagine, if you can, the depth and breadth of the outrage that was thus gratuitously offered to her purity, her pride, and her love. But no one can imagine it who has not been stung to worse than death by such an affected renunciation of a love that is to the one more than life, and to the renouncer less than nothing. We may depict and realize mere murders of the body without having soiled our hands in human blood, but we must have been victims before we can realize such soul-murders as these.

She tried to think of her children—tried to think savingly of the poor little straws at which failing women always clutch when the waters of tribulation are rising up and threatening to overwhelm them. But the recollection of their utter inability to sympathize with her came upon her and thrust her back upon herself, upon her own strength—which was gone.

She could not, to have saved her life, have spoken conventional words now; she could not, to have saved her life, have tried to turn into a joke that which was the most solemn earnest of her life; she could only let the thought that was in her heart fall from her lips in broken words that told her tormentor of her agony.

"Heaven forgive you, and help me if I can!"

Mrs. Waldron slept the sleep of the just that night, a balmy conviction spreading itself over her slumbers that she had tied the hands of the only woman in the world of whom she was afraid. "However much I may go on with Gilbert now," she thought, as she bound her yellow hair round her shapely head the next morning, "Horatia won't dare to strike the note of discord should Frank appear out of season. I wonder if she suspects that he likes her. If she does, half my triumph over her is marred, when she has time to think."

She planned out her day before she went down. She would indicate that she wished for a quiet walk in Kensington Gardens, and by a droop of her lashes she would inform Gilbert Denham that he might be her companion; and once under green trees—well, Gilbert Den-

ham would be more than man if he refrained from telling her whatever she desired to hear.

As soon as breakfast was over, the pretty woman made herself prettier than ever in a walking costume, and managed to make Gilbert understand that he was to be her escort, and Horatia was left to her household cares, and the contemplation of the injustice of all things, for an hour in solitude.

At the end of that hour an impatient hansom drove up to, and an impatient knock resounded at, the door, and handsome Frank Stapylton was ushered in, looking eager and expectant.

"You are but just too late to have joined Cecil in her walk," she said, as collectedly as she could, for her mind was in a turmoil. And there was nothing but satisfaction with things as they were in his reply.

"Never mind; it's so long since I have had a word with you that I'm delighted to find you alone."

"This early devotion will be surprising, even to Cecil, accustomed as she is to be the object of it," she answered, resolutely. "She told me yesterday that she didn't expect you yet awhile, but the devotee can not be kept from the shrine."

"The devotee in this case has been kept from his shrine far too long," he muttered. And then he drew back with the air of a man who felt he had been overstepping the bounds of prudence; and Horatia knew that the onus of maintaining ease at this interview was laid upon her.

"I'm glad to hear, Frank, that the brief time you have been absent from the woman you are going to marry seems long to you. I'm more and more convinced that the feeling of entire devotion is the *one* feeling necessary, if you would make a happy marriage. It is the needful feeling—"

"And Cecil has not inspired it in me," he interrupted. "I have come to talk to you as a friend, Horatia. I have come to make a confession, before the greatest error I've ever been guilty of in my life is indissolubly consummated."

"Make it to any one but me—to any one on earth but me," she pleaded, ardently. And his answer was—

"You owe it to me to listen. If you refuse, my faith in all womankind will be shaken."



CHAPTER XXII.

"SO SLIGHT A THING."

"HOWEVER much you may wish that I should marry Cecil," Frank began, probing Horatia's feelings, as woman's feelings are perpetually being probed for the gratification of man's selfish vanity—"however much you may wish that I should marry Cecil, you'll hardly advise me to be so rash, I fancy, when you have heard what I have to say."

"You ought to say it to her, not to me," Horatia protested.

"If I did, it might drive her mad with mortification; she shall hear what has happened from the other side."

"What do you mean by the other side? Why speak in parables?" she remonstrated.

"She has perpetuated the stalest stage-trick, and blundered in doing it," he said, scornfully; "the most effete of dramatists would hesitate about introducing such an episode into his maiden piece, even. She has put a letter that was destined for another man into an envelope that was addressed to me, and probably he finds himself the recipient of all the ardent expressions of affection she feels called upon to lavish on me in writing."

"And you can speak of this mockingly?" she asked, sadly. "Oh, Frank! I pity you so much!"

"What for?" he asked, in manly wonderment at the pathetic veracity there was in her tone. Frank was only a man, therefore utterly incapable of looking round two or three corners when treading the mazes of such delicate ground. It never occurred to him that it was natural for the woman who loved him to really pity him for being deceived by the woman he loved.

"What for?" she repeated, with magnificent amazement at his inability to grasp the subject, and hold it up in the full light, and see it

as her clearer vision saw it. "What for? Why, Frank, poor fellow, you must be shamed through all your nature, to have loved so slight a thing, if she has written to that other man as you would not have had her write."

"Yes, I have been done most horribly," he answered, meditatively, "and I acknowledge that I feel sore and savage; but I wish you to believe me when I tell you it is only a wound to my vanity. My heart, if I have one, is not hurt by Cecil's conduct; I'm thankful to be free of her—"

"Frank," she cried out, "for Heaven's sake respect the memory of your dead love, however violently that love has been killed." And then he rose up and went and stood before her, and dared his fate.

"Horatia, I won't ask for the boon at your hand immediately, or soon even, but by-and-by, when time has effaced, partially, at least, from your mind the shadow of the untrustworthy love I have had for Cecil."

"Time never will give back the love you have wasted on her," she interrupted, passionately. "Without doubt you will recover the blow she has given—but the heart you could offer to another—how cold it would be! I could not live with such knowledge as I have of your past, oppressing my heart and my brain. We will still be the best of friends, Frank; but I will not burden my life with the ten thousand doubts and cares and the miseries of a lightly-loved wife."

She passed from the room as she spoke, and he stood still, startled and pleased, recalling each phase of that passionate mood, which betrayed that she loved him already.

"She has been the right one all through," he assured himself, "the other has been all phantasy and glamour."

The breeze was sweet and low in Kensington Gardens this day. Faint fragrance from far-off boxes of mignonnette was borne upon it, telling pretty tales of carefully-tended window-gardens, and flower-laden balconies in the squares and streets contingent to this crowning glory of the western suburbs—the glorious green trees and sward that lie like an Emerald Isle between Bayswater and Kensington.

Along one of the velvet-turfed alleys, under a leafy canopy, that did away with the heat of the sunbeams, and added to their beauty as they broke through and fell flickeringly in her pleasant path, Cecil Waldron sauntered along, enjoying the present.

Enjoying it with a thorough abandonment to such delights as it was affording her, as is rarely found in the purely English nature. For all her fair Saxon beauty, there must have been a touch of Southern sensuousness in the woman who could so entirely cut herself off from the contemplation of both past and future as she was doing now.

The conditions that were essential for this isolation of herself from all that had gone before, and all that might come after, were not of extreme rarity. A pleasant warmth in the atmosphere, a golden radiance in the sky, the knowledge that she was dressed to perfection, and the conviction that a man who had not done so before was on the brink of allowing himself to be the victim of her bow and spear. These were the sole conditions she demanded, and she had them now.

It was in this woman's nature to turn away as carelessly from the human creature who had but just before excited her keenest interest, as a child does from the air-ball it has burst—the air-ball that was so beautiful and bewitching a thing before it was broken. The pleasure of the present moment was the one thing that she craved for. And her way of throwing herself heartily into the present, without even giving a tender thought to any thing else, won for her a far larger meed of confidence from her current companions, than those women can ever gain who have consciences sufficiently tender to be retrospective, and hearts sufficiently warm to be prophetic.

How was he to know that this game which she was playing with such consummate grace and skill she had played with Frank Stapylton and Danvers, without ceasing, during the last few months? Practice had made her so very perfect that it never occurred to him that she had been trying her 'prentice hand on others. For there were no harsh angles, no cruel hard

lines, no coarse patches of over-warm coloring in the manner of her flirtation. He floated "gently o'er a perfumed sea" of danger, without a rock, a beacon, or a cloud to warn him of his peril.

Gradually, cautiously as they insensibly grew more intimate and at ease, she approached the subject of Horatia's reserve toward herself, and the possible cause of it. "Dare I tell you what I think?" she questioned; "dare I tell you how doubly unfortunate I am?"

"You wrong yourself by believing either that you are disliked by her, or that you can suppose she has a shadow of a cause for disliking you. You're over-sensitive."

"I know that I am that," she answered, with delightful readiness, "but my sensitiveness rarely leads me astray; and I am not angry with her for entertaining feelings of dislike to me. Poor thing! she can't help them; she will never know, perhaps, how willingly I would have had things as she wishes; she will never know that what would add to her happiness would also add to mine."

She said these words in her softest voice, said them with her violet eyes shaded by tremulous lashes, and with the faint rose-tint flushing her face. And the manner of her speech shook him sorely, and made him curse the honorable bonds that kept her from him.

Still he restrained himself, and suffered silence to reign; and she was compelled to own to herself, with something like admiration, that he was less weak than she had thought him. But a demon of vanity whispered to her that to leave things as they were now would be to own herself defeated. And the day was so warm and sunny, and what was the worth of all the warmth and sunshine without love?

"Don't be angry with me," she resumed, imploringly; "but I am such a sympathetic woman, that I *must* speak. I can't maintain cool, indifferent silence when I see things going all wrong. Horatia would have been such a devoted wife to Frank, and she's so clever, that, if she could have once gained it, she would have kept his heart."

He was a clever man, but he no more detected the underlying cruelty of her remark than a fool would have done. Even a dog would have ceased wagging his honest tail if he had heard the stealthiness which crept into her tones. But Gilbert Denham was a man in love.

"How generous you are!" he exclaimed; "you can speak of the possibility of resigning a man you love, to a woman whom you think

distrusts you. Heaven forgive him if he does not value you as you deserve to be valued."

"I think Frank does that," Cecil thought to herself, with a certain sly humor in which she was not deficient. Then she said aloud, in a spasmodic way, as if the truth were being wrested from her, which it was not—

"Resign a man I love! No, no, no; not even to a sister!"

He was a boy in her hands for all his years of seniority—a slave, a fool! There was something pitiful even, she felt, in the way he suffered her to wield him.

"You shouldn't say such things to me if you don't mean them; they madden a man, and you would resent the promptings of madness, and hurl me down to such depths as my presumption deserves. Cecil, you shouldn't do it."

They had come close up to the Kensington end of the Row by this time, and she was turning her head away from him as he stood by the rails, feigning so sweetly to be embarrassed by his words—watching so keenly for the appearance of one gallant rider whom she knew to be an *habitué* of this place.

"What a bright scene! the flower of the land!" she exclaimed presently. "Pick out the prettiest woman and the handsomest horse, Mr. Denham."

"An impossible thing to do," he answered, as group after group trooped by. "There's a woman who looks like riding, on that slippery-looking chestnut; she has a rattling good seat, too, or that would have shaken her."

He pointed with his cane as he spoke toward a lady who was coming down from the Kensington end of the Row, close along by the railings against which Cecil and himself were standing. She was unattended, either by cavalier or groom, and there was something marked about her costume, quiet as it was. A dead-black cloth habit, unrelieved by either braid or button, contrasted strongly and strikingly with the glossy golden chestnut coat of the horse which carried her. Her hat was of dull felt. Her veil was of thick black gauze. "She looks a terrible woman to me, however well she may ride," Cecil said, as the woman on the chestnut approached them, holding her nervous, excitable horse down with firm, steady hands. And as she turned her face to them with an air of dogged defiance of their worst opinion, they looked in questioning wonderment, one to the other, as they saw her to be Emmeline Vicary.

He felt so sorry for her. In spite of all that had gone before, he felt so sorry for the

woman who would make a futile effort to triumph in her own abasement. He watched her pityingly as she rode along in that solitude to which she was self-condemned, and he saw a certain weariness, a certain hopeless renunciation of all attempts to seem happier than she was, that touched him infinitely.

"I'm sorry to see her here in this way," he said, turning to his companion appealingly; he hoped that the beautiful, true, womanly feeling with which he accredited Cecil would come to the fore now, and manifest itself in a genuinely sympathetic speech about the woman who must have fallen low indeed before she could have climbed to this prominent height. And Cecil was not capable of responding to such an appeal, even in seeming, since she had nothing to gain by it.

"You surely never expected to see her here in any other way, did you?" she asked, contemptuously; "it's just the platform upon which an aspiring lady's-maid would alight. She never desired any thing better, let me assure you. Why on earth should you delude yourself with the notion that she deserved something higher?"

If an ugly, unattractive, awkward woman had spoken thus, what a homily Gilbert Denham would have read himself on the elastic subject of the proverbial uncharitableness of women toward all womanly shortcomings. But she who spoke now was so very greatly gifted with all those glorious graces of body to which men are ever ready to subordinate their minds, that he felt it to be quite worth his while to appeal against her condemnatory dicta.

"You're so good and true yourself that you can't realize that a woman may step aside from the straight path, without designing to go utterly to the bad," he said, haltingly. It shocked him that Cecil should be so evidently willing to resign a fellow-creature to the worst of wordly fates. And so he tried to make her attribute to her ignorance that which was entirely due to her jealous ill-nature.

She laughed viciously, and leaned forward uneasily to watch, as the subject of their discourse wheeled her horse round lightly and cantered up the opposite side of the Row. And Gilbert Denham ached as he saw that the feeling which was paramount in the breast of the woman by his side was not one of pitiful shrinking, but a strong, bold, wicked hatred of the apparent success of the one who was making a subdued parade of her infamy.

"Shall we walk on?" he asked. There was the old fascination of repulsion for him about

that black-habited rider of the skittish chestnut horse. But fascinating as it was, he shrunk from watching her progress. The sight of the woman alone, unattended, was painful enough, but to see any light and easy claim made upon her powers of recognition would be harder still.

"Walk on!—no," Cecil cried, querulously. "Look at her now, bowing, pulling up, claiming acquaintance with that man on the white horse, as if she had any more right to it than the mud under his feet! Look, look, *Gilbert*; and you pitied her just now!"

She turned an angry, furrowed face toward him. She spoke out each word with harsh, thrilling emphasis. She became violently, terribly in earnest all at once, as she made a slight gesture toward the pair on whom her attention was fixed.

"Do come on, Mrs. Waldron," Gilbert Denham pleaded. "It's a beautiful panorama this for five minutes, but after the expiration of five minutes it's only a delusively beautiful purgatory. Do come on!"

"Do look at the man on the white horse," she cried out, sharply. "See him by that black demon's side; *my* waiting-woman riding with *him*. Do you know that man?"

She turned and fronted him, her fair face whitened with passion, her violet eyes deepening with a cruel intensity that was painfully suggestive of madness.

"Do you know that man by her now? Don't you know that man?" she repeated; "it's Charlie Danvers, and it's an insult to me that he should notice her existence. Oh, Gilbert, Gilbert Denham, I must tell you he professes to love me."

"And you have accepted his professions of love?"

"Yes—in a measure; you don't know how I'm persecuted; I should die, I believe, if I didn't feel that I had you to turn to. What can it mean?"

She asked the question eagerly, as the woman on the chestnut and a man on a white Arab passed by. And Gilbert Denham's conscience whispered to him that the man on the white horse had found out the fascinating falsehood by his (*Gilbert's*) side.

"Let us go home; Horatia will be waiting luncheon for us," he suggested.

"No; I won't go home until I have had a word with Charlie Danvers. Why, he came here to meet me; we expressly arranged that we should both be here to-day at this house; and now, see how he treats me! see it! see it!"

She was growing reckless in her wrath. She was throwing down her cards and making her plaint most openly, and still he would not quite condemn her. That the man about whom her anger was rife was treating her precisely as she deserved to be treated, Gilbert felt morally sure. But then justice should be tempered with mercy, and though he was beginning to find her out as so weak, he did not desire to see her weakness punished openly before the eyes of all men in this way.

"He can't know you are here," he said, hurriedly; "and even if he did know it, Miss Vicary has held the position of a gentlewoman, don't you know? There's no insult offered, there's no insult intended; she's not sufficiently well versed in the ways of this wicked world to know that it's a reprehensible thing to ride unattended."

"Well, if you're false enough to your real feelings to say such things to me, I needn't combat the sentiment you defend," she said, bitterly. "He knows that I am here, he knows why I am here, he knows what that woman is, and he means me to understand that my reign is over, that I am a dethroned queen, that the light love of one woman is as good in his eyes as the love that seems light of—"

"Don't say a word now—don't say a word now," he interrupted, confusedly, for it hurt him, for her sake, to feel how unadvisedly, how recklessly, she was exposing herself.

"Why shouldn't I say a word more?" she cried, imperiously, "there's nothing more to be lost—or gained. Do you think I value Frank's fealty or your paltry homage? I may be *mad* to say it, but it is the truth, if Charles Danvers could persuade me that this was a sham, I'd value it ten thousand times higher than any thing I felt to be a reality from any one else. I like him—I like him; look at the way he looks at her, and ask yourself if I can stand it."

She nervously opened and shut her parasol as she spoke, for the pair under discussion were nearing them rapidly, and the rider of the chestnut seemed to have her hands full, as far as regarded the management of her horse. The sleek, beautiful white Arab undulated along as if it hadn't a kick or a buck in it; but for all that apparent quiescence, there was a restless glance in its sweet eyes that spoke its own story of hardly suppressed power.

"The beautiful beast! doesn't it seem to suit him?" she said, savagely. "Look at him laying his hand on that arching neck! Look at him nearing me, and looking me in the face mockingly! Oh, Gilbert! has the end come?"

Culpable, evanescent as her feeling was for the man who was riding the white Arab, it was bitter to bear at this moment. She was a thorough woman in this, that she yearned always to "reign and reign alone, and always give the law." It absolutely hurt her to feel that her power was waning over any man's soul, lightly as she might have estimated the honor while her empire lasted. That Charlie Danvers should give her the initiative, and show thus clearly and openly that he no longer had any "appetite for her proffered love," stung her as she had never been stung before. For though she had never meant one of them, she had offered her vows to him freely, and now he had found her out, and was slighting her.

As he passed away out of their sight she made one valiant effort to seem the thing she was not—unconcerned, namely. Now that the first paroxysm of her fury had spent itself, she was aware that she had, by her open expressions of wrathful, jealous disappointment, weakened her cause with the man by her side. To be sure, there was Frank, foolishly faithful, loyally-loving Frank, to fall back upon, even if all the others should prove defaulters. But there was no triumph in developing the loving fidelity of a man who was on the brink of pledging it to her publicly, and of legally binding her claims about himself. It would be terribly tame to be the recipient of Frank's love and homage only. It would be painfully monotonous not to have any other man to turn to, with the certain knowledge that the other man was aching at heart and soured in spirit on her account. Accordingly, Gilbert being the only

man at hand who might be made to suffer in this way, she turned to him with all the subtle suavity of which she was mistress, and bent all her powers to the task of banishing the remembrance of her burst of jealous wrath from his mind.

"Quick with the tale, and ready with the lie," she promptly compiled a pretty fable concerning the sisterly nature of her feelings for Charles Danvers, and the affectionate hopes she had been weak enough to nourish of seeing him married, by-and-by, to a dear friend of her own. "I won't tell you her name, for she has seen and liked him, and I think there is nothing baser than one woman betraying the confidence of another," she murmured, plaintively.

And though Gilbert felt convinced that the suddenly-mentioned friend was merely a creature of her own brain, he was touched for the moment by the tone of tenderness, and the enunciation of such sweet sentiments. To use his own graphic idiom, he had just had a thorough "eye-opener" about the lady by his side. But while it was close to him, the influence of her fair face was very potent.

She had nearly soothed away all unpleasant recollections of that scene in the Row by the time they reached home. Once more he was letting himself be lulled into temporary oblivion upon the "perfumed sea" of unwise, unlawful love. And so it was with a queer admixture of pleasure and pain that he heard from his sister that Frank Stapylton had come up to town to release Cecil from vows which she had already broken.





CHAPTER XXIII.

SELF-RELEASED.

AFTER asking for Horatia's advice a score of times, and not taking it on a single point once, as is the manner of men—after altering his determination again and again as to the way in which he would convey to the woman who had deceived him the knowledge that he had discovered her duplicity—after, in fact, making a vast number of complex plans that cost him a great deal of trouble, Frank Stapylton came back to commonplace and common sense, and decided on writing a plain statement to Cecil, which was the obvious thing for him to have done at first.

The writing of the plain statement, by a man to a woman who has been dear to him, that he has discovered her to be a perfidious fool, must be an unpleasant task under any circumstances. It was doubly, desperately unpleasant to Frank. In the first place, there was the inevitable wrenching off of every tender association; and added to this there was that equally inevitable contiguity of theirs in the county, which would make it impossible for that perfect severing of every link between them which alone seemed tolerable to him now.

And there was something else which made his task an unpalatable one. There was a dawning consciousness in the breast of this man, who was as little of a hero as are the majority of men whom one meets in real life, there was a dawning consciousness in his breast that his own shield was a trifle dimmed. If Cecil had been deserving of his fullest love and most perfect faith, how would it have been about that feeling which intertwined itself so luxuriantly about the fabric of his friendship for Horatia, and made the fabric a far fairer thing than it would otherwise have been. In very truth he knew himself to be no Knight of Purity—he acknowledged with very little shame, and

no contrition at all, that his faith had wavered from the hour he pledged it to Cecil, and that his love had strayed from the moment it had been her sole right.

Now this perfect knowledge of his own weakness, although he had no manner of shame and contrition about it, did fetter him for the performance of his task. She, the one whom he was openly going to cast out from her place in his heart, had erred deeply in daring to have a preference for another man, also in having been found out. But how about himself? it must be asked again. He, too, had dared to have a preference for another woman, and he had not been found out, though he had also dared to show that other woman that he felt it. His secret was enshrined in his own breast, and in the breast of one of the staunchest women in the world. Otherwise, his conscience would insist on putting the question, Would he have been able to sit in the seat of the scornful, above Cecil, as he did in the present instance?

Nevertheless, "Two wrongs never make a right," as he told himself re-assuringly. Man is more strongly subjected to temptation, is more liable to errors, and is, of course, to be more leniently judged on all occasions of his slipping and tumbling down by the rest of his fellow-sinners than woman is. This rule is too firmly established for it ever to be broken through in this world. Let us humbly hope, that if the Spiritualists' theory is correct, and the next is a "progressive" world, there will be a fair field and no favor shown between the two sexes when the everlasting race for rewards and punishments is run.

Meanwhile, the old order obtaineth, and Frank acted according to it—writing his letter of renunciation of Cecil in as strong a condemnatory spirit as he dared display to a wom-

an whom he was releasing from his thrall. But in one respect he was very generous—generous in a way that many men are when called upon to commit the cruelty of showing women that they don't care for them any more.

"The statement that our engagement is at an end must go forth to the world at once," he wrote; "but I entreat you to give it what color you think best; let every one believe that yours has been the severing hand. I shall never contradict you."

And then he sealed and sent it; and the thing was done.

Cecil had gone to her own room at once on her return from her saunter by the Row which had been the means of such mortification to her. She had gone at once to her own room, and comforted herself considerably by reclining in the easiest of easy-chairs before a huge cheval-glass, and contemplating the reflection of her own person in its attitude of gracefully indolent ease. After all, this morning's episode was only a temporary slur on the fair, shining surface of her general satisfaction. A man who had been her slave had probably heard something which had made him jealous—had scented another of her wild flirtations—and determined on being her slave no longer. Well! there were many more men in the world, and, as she really meant to marry Frank, Charles Danvers's claims might have developed into proportions of tedious, troublesome magnitude. It was all better as it was—only she did wish that her white elephant had rid her of himself in another way—and not in the presence of his possible successor in her favor.

She had refused to go down to luncheon, and Horatia, with that burden of Frank's visit and communication on her mind, had gladly kept away from her guest's chamber; and so now, late in the afternoon, that guest was still in ignorance of the other cloud that was arising—was still deriving half unconscious comfort from the thought that there was always Frank to rely on, and Gilbert to fall back upon in the mean time.

"Half an hour in that flowery, shady drawing-room will be delicious before dinner," she thought, rousing herself up and setting about her toilet duties with a skill and whole-heartedness she had never displayed about duties of any other kind in the whole of her vain life. And very perfectly she succeeded in them, was a verdict that any observer would have been compelled to give by-and-by, when the soft gold-color silk dress fell in rich, unstiffened folds about her. She understood the secret of har-

monious coloring, this woman who understood so little else that was good. The color of her dress was the same as her glorious golden hair, only a tone or two less bright; and the sheen on the ribbon that passed through that hair matched the wood-violet tint of her eyes exactly. She loitered about her room until seven, deferring going down until the half-hour bell rang, as she had no desire for a *tête-à-tête* with Horatia; but when this signal was given, she began her progress down with a little air. She determined to do away with any impression he might have of her passion and depression of the morning, and so she went out of her room with a sort of cheerful rush, and passed with a light true step along the corridor, singing as she went.

Singing out a bar or two of a melody that is always sweet in our ears, even if we hear it ground out by a barrel-organ, or brayed out by a German band, a melody by means of which Louisa Pyne taught us how wondrous witching English words sang by an English tongue can be—"The Power of Love."

But Gilbert Denham, hearing it distinctly as he did, fetching as he felt it to be, would not allow himself to be fetched by it on this occasion. He was not in his dressing-room, as she had supposed. He was smoking a pipe leisurely, previous to dressing—smoking and blowing hazy clouds of disbelief around himself, in the integrity of women in general, and Mrs. Waldron in particular.

"I hear the voice of the charmer most distinctly," he laughed to himself as he listened. "You're warbling very pleasantly, and yesterday I should have followed, believing both in you and your lay: you pretty liar!" he thought contemptuously, as he roused himself from his inert enjoyment of his pipe, and, looking at his watch, saw that the hour had come for him to go and dress and dine. "You pretty liar! it seems almost cruel to have found you out."

The exquisite balance of Horatia's system of household management had been upset this day, in consequence of that invasion upon her time and sympathies which Frank Stapylton had made in the morning. And so the cook had received her orders later, and the butcher had taken a mean advantage of the situation, and declined to redeem the lost hour at the cost of extra speed on the part of his boys and horse, and the result was a course of unpunctuality during the day, culminating in the half-past seven o'clock dinner being unappetizingly under-cooked at eight o'clock; a delay which allowed Cecil to receive Frank Stapylton's let-

ter before the banquet for which she had prepared herself so bewilderingly.

She received it, and read it in the room that was "flowery and shady," the room in which she had designed to carry out the captivation of Gilbert Denham; and as she read it some resolve, some desire, some determination, seemed to give way within her. But she braced herself by a timely recollection of the necessity for immediate action, and turned to take the arm that Mr. Denham offered her deferentially, with a bright, gleaming smile that would have seemed a funny thing even on the face of a satisfied woman.

"Poor thing! she's writhing under the remembrance of the blow she has had," Gilbert thought, in his ignorance of the fact that she had received that "worst blow," and was carrying it in her pocket at the present moment.

Accordingly, assisted in their endeavors by a misunderstanding, they dined together very comfortably, Horatia aiding them unconsciously by her perfect ignorance of two upsetting facts, the first being that *rencontre* in the Row, the second the receipt of that letter from Frank; for, fond as she was of the man herself, she would have assuredly tendered some mute, disabling sympathy to the woman he had surrendered, if she had known that the terms of the surrender were then in that woman's pocket.

Some subtle, undefinable essence of intelligence breathed through all of this, and made clear to Cecil that, however much Horatia might know of Frank's mind, the knowledge of the worst that had befallen her (Cecil) was still to come. "And until she knows that he has found me out, and found me worthless, she will be very tolerant to me for his sake," the frail-brained schemer thought as she reviewed the situation, and made an excellent dinner toward filling that situation properly. The old widely-accepted statement as to a woman in love having no appetite may be true or false—it is impossible to verify it. But there is not the faintest shadow of a doubt about the fact of a woman who is feigning to be in love with several people simultaneously, needing a fair portion of good, stimulating diet, and developing into a decidedly carnivorous creature. The occupation is exhaustive—to be alternately queen and slave in rapid succession to different people is fatiguing to the last degree. Cecil recognized the calls that would probably be made upon her, and strengthened herself to bear them to the best of her ability.

She realized, as soon as she had mastered the contents of the letter which had cost Frank

so much trouble to word properly—to word with the discreet determination which was necessary—she realized at once, as soon as she had read this letter, that there was no appeal against its decision. Frank would never revoke it; would never be wax again to receive any impression which she might desire to give him. He had done with her, done with her definitely. At once through the darkness of the shadow cast over her pride, gleamed the encouraging light of a resolve to show him that he could be supplanted at a moment's notice.

Mrs. Arthur Waldron, constrained by the knowledge she had of Frank's fully-pledged wrath, and by the miserable uncertainty she was in as to his but half-pledged intentions about Cecil, was utterly incapable of backing up the conversational efforts that Cecil made with flippant facility, and Gilbert responded to with convulsive zeal. There was something almost ghastly to Horatia in the fact that her guest and rival grew more sparkingly excited, more feverishly animated, more bewilderingly pretty each moment. And how eagerly Gilbert watched her too, watched her with an air of puzzled, wondering admiration that startled his sister, and stirred the object of his watch up to more strenuous efforts.

She never relaxed these efforts to be amusing, to be bewitching, for a minute, until she and Horatia had got themselves away into the drawing-room alone; then she heaved a short, passionate sigh of genuine fatigue, and flung herself on the sofa, her hands clasped together, tightly covering her tired, gleaming eyes.

"Shall I sing, if you're going to rest a little, Cecil?" Horatia asked. Infinitely more agreeable to her was the prospect of a little of her own music than more of Cecil's mirth, which had seemed to have a jarring strain in it. Therefore Mrs. Arthur accepted another short, passionate sigh, which burst from Cecil as a sign of acquiescence in her proposition, and so sat down and sang resolutely through two or three songs until her brother joined them.

At his entrance Cecil took her hands away from her eyes, raised herself on her elbow, and called him to her side.

"Gilbert, Gilbert Denham," she whispered softly, as he placed himself on a chair close to the head of the sofa, "I have passed hours in very serious thought since I came home from our walk this morning; do you care to hear what it has been about?"

There was a flickering impatience in her eyes that gave them an entirely new expression. There was a bitterness in the movement

of her hands and arms that, wildly graceful as it was, struck him painfully, suggesting as it did that she was overwrought either in body or mind.

"Don't you think it would be well for you to rest to-night instead of talking about any thing that might possibly agitate you?" he replied, very gently. She was such a pretty woman, that grievously as he had grown to distrust her, he could not help being gentle, almost tender, to her when she appealed to him in this way.

"Don't you care to hear what I've been thinking of, Gilbert," she resumed, placing her hand on his arm, and gradually tightening her clasp, in a way that involuntarily made him think of the detaining claws coming out with stealthy force from the velvet paw of a sweet-faced, cruel-hearted cat; "don't you care, after pretending to care for me so much?"

"My dear Mrs. Waldron—" he was beginning, but she interrupted him impatiently,

"Call me Cecil; who has a better right to address me familiarly than you?"

"The man you're going to marry might object to it," he said, as steadily as he could, under a swiftly-growing sense of there being danger in the air; "as to not caring to hear what you have been thinking about, I assure you I should be delighted to listen, if you didn't look so hopelessly tired."

"The man I'm going to marry!" she repeated slowly; "I wonder who that man is!"

"Horry's right, then; there is a screw loose with that fellow 'Stapylton,'" Gilbert thought; and, rather to his own surprise, he found that he had not the faintest desire to avail himself of the opportunity that would have seemed so golden a one to him a few days ago.

"Yes, I wonder who that man is," she said, flinging her head back on the sofa cushion, and tossing her arms up in an arch above her crown of golden hair. "It's not Frank Stapylton, let me tell you that; I'm going to break off my engagement with him; I entered into it for gratitude, not love's sake; I'll be bound by it no longer. Gilbert, will you be glad that I do so?"

"If it adds to your happiness, yes," he answered, gravely; and he had a hint of a coming storm in the fierce impatience with which she writhed up from her recumbent position and confronted him.

"Disappointment, disappointment, nothing all my weary life but disappointment!" she cried out sharply. "Why did you men between you tear me from my living tomb, when

at least I had no memory one hour for the troubles of the hour before it? why did you between you wake my reason and my heart, only to torture both? why?"

"Oh! Cecil, don't excite yourself to-night when you're so weary," Horatia said, soothingly, coming and putting her cool hands on the hot, throbbing brow of the almost raving woman. But the soothing words and soft, sympathetic touch fell like oil on flames.

"Don't touch me, scorpion!" Cecil shrieked out; "you have taken one of them from me—you have poisoned his mind against me" (she pointed to Gilbert as she spoke), "and all you have done will seem right, and all I have done will seem wrong—" She stopped herself suddenly, and then broke out into a hollow, pitiful laugh, and the brother and sister looked at each other with the dawning of the dread that was in their minds, legibly written in their eyes.

And this was the dread that was soon to become a certainty, that the weak mind was wavering. Wavering under the influence of the strongest passion of which its owner was capable—a disappointed, thwarted vanity.

It was a terrible task that which was laid upon Gilbert Denham and his sister now. It was an awful responsibility, a ghastly onus. Each knew that every action respecting her was liable to misconstruction. Each felt that they were bound to work for her weal far more earnestly than if they had loved her well, and her sanity had been a desirable thing.

The relapse was not one of those gradual things that rack lookers-on with suspense. It came on with one of those shocks that stir up the sensibilities strongly at first, and then stulify them by the sheer force of exhaustion. It was appalling to see her mind going further and further astray every hour. It was crushing to Horatia to reflect on how very nearly one who was dear and precious to her had been entangled in the river of that mind. But the time came when the reaction against the power of these reflections set in of necessity.

"She may recover after an interval," was the verdict eventually passed upon her case by the first medical authorities in matters of insanity. Meanwhile her property was taken charge of by agents who were legally appointed. A certain income for her benefit was paid to the head of the private asylum in which she was placed; and poor little Gerald's chances of succession to the Larpington estate faded away from the realms of probability again.

And during this perplexing period Frank Stapylton's position was a curious and rather

harassing one. Publicly he was in the position still of the man who was pledged to become Cecil's husband. And though he knew, and quickly made Horatia comprehend that he was released from that pledge, still he could not proclaim it to the world at large, and the memory that it had existed erected itself as a barrier between himself and a closer intimacy with Horatia.

The power of the woman mad, in fact, was greater against them than the power of the woman sane had been. For they were perpetually remembering her, and with the perversity of reasoning creatures, unreasonably remembering what might have happened to her, and to them, if she had been utterly different to what she was. And these remembrances, although they were foolish and futile, had a very separating force about them; and so neither Mrs. Arthur Waldron nor Frank Stapylton felt much else beside a sense of immediate relief when all things concerning Cecil were settled, and they felt themselves free to part—with very vague notions as to whether they would ever meet again or not.

A few months passed away without there being any very material change in the condition of the two widows—any material change in their outward condition, that is to say. Cecil was rather more disordered in mind than heretofore, but she was equally beautiful, and all the arrangements for her physical comfort were equally perfect in their organization. Horatia still kept her brother's house, and believed in the propriety of every other earthly right being rendered up to her children. But her mind was better ordered than of old. For good or ill (who can tell?) to her a change had come. She had outlived the romance of her life. She had not tried to kill it, but she had seen it die. And in watching its death she had not suffered such agony as makes a wound that may never be healed.

When I say that she had not tried to kill it, it must be distinctly understood that this statement has reference only to the time when it became a justifiable act on her part to let it live. She tried hard enough to strangle it; to crush it, to put it aside in any way, poor thing, while Cecil's apparent sanity rendered it a reprehensible thing. But afterward she suffered its existence with patient, mute endurance. And when it might have grown and strengthened, it was an altogether new pain to her to see it fade away and die.

How the withering influences set in, why changes should have come, she could not tell.

No jealous vision intervened on the one side, no higher ideal dazzled her on the other. She would have shrunk from the thought of his being superseded in her regard as from something soiling. She would have felt degraded in her own estimation if she had ever experienced the most passing twinges of regret or remorse, or mortification or annoyance for that she had unconsciously thrown a halo of romance over her sentiments toward him. She could bear that they should be forced into the full light of day if needs be, although she knew that they were those most harrowing of all the friends we have left behind us—"the feelings" of the past.

She turned to the contemplation of her own case, and studied it analytically, as though it had been the case of an interesting friend or enemy, and she could make out nothing about it. Here was no fresh interest introduced, no sort of satiety involved, no feminine vanity mixed up with the question. He had not wearied her, nor piqued her, nor had any other man put his light out. He had simply ceased to be the one paramount interest life held for her. And how had this come about?

She could not tell; it was impossible to tell! But indulging all this belief in the impossibility of accurately discerning and declaring the "reason why" this change had come, there ran a silver stream of suspicion of herself, which compelled her to seek for her own motives, for her own meaning, for her own "meanings," in short.

Of all the agonies which we are called upon to endure, perhaps this supreme one of leaving off a feeling that has given all the vitality to our existence for a given period, is the bitterest, the most barren, the most unsatisfying, the most demoniacally tantalizing. I am not speaking now of those common cases in which one nail has been knocked out by another, or in which jealousy has done battle with love in our souls, or in which a certain lightness of heart, and slightness of feeling has carried one away from the secure ground of "what ought to be" to the shifting sands of what "might perhaps be pleasanter." I am not speaking now of these which are comparatively common cases. I am speaking of the far sharper pang a woman experiences who is by her nature compelled to "leave off" suddenly a liking or a love which has heretofore been like life to her, and who can not even to herself assign a reason for doing so.

This sort of self-release is one that if we dared to tell the truth, we would gladly ex-

change for the harshest bondage love can impose upon us.' For after we have achieved it, the world is apt to seem "nothing worth"—and what is worse even, we are apt to regard the follies of the past, committed under such a much gentler *régime*, as so very inexcusable.

"Is it a phase?" one asks with anxiety. "Or is it the real, right, permanent feeling which ought to obtain with us; is it false, and is all the rest true?"

Echo feebly answers, "Is all the rest true?" but who can answer that question.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"LOVE IS ENOUGH."

"SIX months to-day since poor Cecil went to the asylum! By Jove! how time passes! It doesn't seem so long, does it, now?"

The speaker was Frank Stapyhton, the time evening, the scene just above the old Kingston Bridge.

He addressed his remarks to the company generally, and the company consisted of one other man and one lady. The lady only answered it.

"Sometimes it seems like six years to me: that's when I think of all the changes in myself. At other times it only seems like six days: that's when I see how utterly unchanged all the people and conditions are about me."

It was Horatia Waldron who made this response, lifting herself up from her cushioned seat, and resting her hand on the shoulders of the man who was pulling bow"—her brother Gilbert.

"You see a change of color here, at least, don't you?" Gilbert Denham said, turning round, lifting his cap off, and running his fingers through his hair. "I'm in the silvery age thoroughly, Horry. I wasn't that six months ago, dear; yet you speak of the people about you being 'utterly unchanged.'"

"Perhaps I was thinking more of their hearts than their heads, Gilbert," she said, in a free, unthinking way; and then she remembered how much fire had gone out in her own heart, and how much feeling had veered about in Frank Stapyhton's, and blushed the first blush that had colored her cheeks connected with him for some weeks.

"Do you think there has been no change in the hearts of some of those about you, then?" he cried, briskly, cutting into the conversation in a loud tone, as his honorable position of stroke demanded. "You haven't marked signs very closely, I'm afraid—in my case, for instance."

She looked at him as he ceased speaking, and liked him so much! He would always have such a thoroughly good place in her estimation; but how could she ever have throbbed about him as she had done once? Or, rather, having so throbbed, how could she have grown so strangely still, and calm, and cold, as she was now?

She asked herself this question as he looked back at her with his old unaltered, bright, frank smile; and she hated herself for having to ask it. He was the same; he was so essentially the same, that it shamed her to think that only the other day she had regarded him with such utterly different feelings. He was the same frank, fine, candid, impressionable, slightly selfish fellow, whose indifference had made her purgatory and whose interest had made her heaven but a short time ago; and now, though she *liked* him as well as ever, she found herself now and again attempting to give herself a satisfactory reason why she ever loved him.

Presently the subject that was uppermost in the thoughts of each one of them this evening came to the fore, and insisted on being treated with open consideration.

"Our last hours in the Old World together, Horry!" her brother said, tenderly, turning round again to address his sister. "Will you think me worth following into the New, I wonder? Or will you wait here on a forlorn hope?"

"The chances are that I shall follow you," she said, quietly. And then their stroke roused himself, and came lightly back to join them.

"You're not going to try and inveigle Mrs. Arthur across the herring-pond, are you, Gilbert?" he said, deprecatingly. "Putting every other consideration out of the question (if she wishes it to be so put), there is still the question of the succession to the Larpington estates

to be watched over and settled. Poor Cecil is dying as fast as she can, they tell me, and she has never made a will."

"If it's Gerald's it will come to him in time," Horatia answered, cheerfully. "Meanwhile I shall do him more efficient service in trying to teach him to be self-reliant and self-dependent, than in thrusting my hand into a fire that scorched me to the point of disabling me once before. Besides, if I follow Gilbert—I don't say that I shall—but if I do, you'll remain here, and you'll always have a keen eye on my boy's interests, won't you, Frank?"

She said it with such heart-felt intensity of belief in him, that she felt taken down with a jerk when he answered,

"You don't think that I shall remain here if you and Gilbert go, do you?"

"To tell the truth, I had never thought of forming any plans for myself when Gilbert shall be gone, until he asked me just now if I 'thought him worth following.' As for you, Frank, why, of course, you'll remain here. Why should you go?"

"Because you do," he said, abruptly. And then the two men fell to their work of pulling again, and the lady relapsed into silence, with a strong feeling that it would have been better if the subject had not been mooted at all. According to the best of her genuine belief, her sentiment for him had so entirely died out, that the suggestion of the possibility of his love re-awakening for her was startling and perplexing.

It was perplexing, too, when they idly floated, as they did now and again for the men to rest on their oars and drink Champagne, to avoid meeting Frank's questioning gaze. The old love which she had had for him so long had grown faint and died so gradually, had merged, in fact, into such warm, true friendship, that he had been almost unconscious of the death of that which had been Horatia's life for a weary period. It is true that at times he had noted a change. Friendship pure and simple can never feel and never feign the engrossing, monopolizing, jealous, eager interest in the thoughts, and words, and deeds of the friend, that love can not keep itself from exhibiting far too freely to the lover. He had discovered that though Mrs. Arthur Waldron was very glad to see him when he came, she was not very miserable when he staid away; but though he had discerned this change, he was neither hurt, nor mortified, nor piqued by it. He really believed that it was due to her sense of certainty about him. He fancied that as he thoroughly

intended to propose to her to become his wife by-and-by, she had fathomed that intention, and that therefore her heart was at peace—the demons of doubt and restless, jealous anxiety exorcised, and satisfied certainty ruling in the place of suspense that was sometimes almost despair.

But her words this evening undeceived him. They showed him, without any design on her part, that he had passed out of the radius of her calculations. He knew at once that this abnegation was a genuine thing. Horatia was not a woman to feign to retire in order to make a man advance. It was a genuine thing, a reality, and no coquettish sham; and he could not refrain from fastening his eyes on hers with a look that besought her to tell him the reason why.

And she understood that questioning look, and felt sorry for him that he should care to ask, and sorry for herself that she should be compelled to answer—sorry for the change, too, in a measure. Why had it not come when she would have hailed it as her deliverer and savior? Why had it not foreshadowed itself in those old days when to have dreamed of the possibility of one day being indifferent to him would have been such a boon to her harassed heart? But to come now, when it would only bring disappointment to his heart, and nothing but passive peace to hers! It was hard, too hard, to be a just dispensation.

"Shall I go home with you this evening?" he asked, as she was going into the carriage that was waiting for them; and before she could say "yes," Gilbert interposed.

"Don't think me an inhospitable brute for saying 'No' to-night, Stapylton. I have something to say to her that it's time she heard, and that I can't well say before a third person. Come and lunch with us to-morrow, will you?"

"I wish he had been let come to-night, that I might have got it over," Horatia thought; and then she let herself drift away into a sea of conjecture and dread about her brother's promised communication. "I do hope that he is not going to tell me that it's his feeling for Cecil that is driving him from the country," she thought. "She is such an unworthy object for a man to develop constancy about. I'm glad poor Frank got over that, at any rate—though he isn't much wiser now." And then she sighed sorrowfully, partly from fatigue, and partly because she had a dim sense that she really deserved to be made unhappy, because she was not ready to take the good the gods were willing to give her. Her long, full-

drawn sigh depressed her brother, filling him as it did with dismal forebodings of the reception she would give to his news—with dismal forebodings as to the wisdom of the fact which he was about to communicate—with drear doubts as to the advisability of any thing he had ever done or intended to do—and with a dire, rapidly-dawning conviction that perfect happiness and contentment with all things would no more be his portion in the New World than they had been in the Old.

He was about to leave England in two or three days, in order to go out to New York and carry out a commercial scheme which had been projected by a company of which he was the principal part. It was not this fact which he shrank from communicating to his sister. She knew this well, and had talked to him about it a great deal, discussing it rather aggravatingly, from the real womanly point of view, and arguing that as he had so much money already, why should he seek to increase his capital in a sphere and by means that were not congenial to him? It was not this plan of self-expatriation that he had to submit to her; but it was something that kept him strangely silent as they drove home, and his silence steeped her in a sort of hazy, wondering mood, that caused her to seem absent, and made him fear, with a pang, that she would be unsympathetic.

Unsympathetic about what? Ay, that she would know far too soon for her sisterly satisfaction.

They had a late repast that night, a meal that was dinner in substance and supper in seeming—a free, fetterless sort of meal, at which they were not restrained from speech, or constrained to take that which they did not want, by the presence of servants. And it was toward the close of this out-of-course banquet that Gilbert Denham said,

“Horry, I’m going to tell you a decision I’ve come to lately. When you hear it, bear in mind that *you* are the only person, the only consideration in the world that has made me waver as to my own wisdom in having come to it.”

He spoke earnestly, and she was thrown off her balance at once.

“Gilbert, whatever you have done or are going to do must be right, and the best thing, I’m sure of that. But—you haven’t been rash, have you, dear?”

“I don’t know what you will think when you know all about it,” he said, with a gasp and an effort. “You have wished that I would marry again.”

“I have, I have; but, Gilbert, forgive me, I hope you have chosen some one who is so essential to your happiness, so sure to conduce to it, as to make it unimportant to you whether I subscribe heartily to the new scheme or not. I shall be glad, proud to hear you say, ‘Here is my bride; renounce me if you don’t rely upon her as thoroughly as I do.’ It’s what a man ought to feel for the woman he marries.”

She spoke with a sort of panting enthusiasm. She was so very anxious that her brother should mate himself metely this second time. She started, visibly shocked, as though she had received a shower-bath, when, in answer to her appeal, he said,

“Your opinion can never be unimportant to me, Horry. I hope it won’t be a very bad one of the whole business, when I tell you that I am going to marry Emmeline Vicary.”

His sister could not control her nerves; they would betray the surprise, the almost horror she felt. But she could and she did control her tongue. She recovered her breath with a sigh, and, as she did not break the silence, he went on:

“It must all seem very strange to you: it does to myself at times; but I have not been so madly rash as you are certainly justified in supposing me to be. You remember that time I saw her in the Row that last time I was out with poor Cecil? Well, appearances were against her, as I told you, and I was sorry for her, as any man would have been for a woman who had loved him as she undoubtedly had loved me. So I found her out, and discovered that it was only appearances that were against her. In her ignorance of the ways of the world, she took dubious means to attain an end that was not altogether unjustifiable in her position. ‘My mother is always throwing in my teeth that I’m a burden to her, and that it’s through me we shall taste poverty again,’ she said. ‘She says if I show myself in the Park some rich fool may take a fancy and make me his wife. It doesn’t matter to me; my feelings are all blunted, and I’ve nothing more to lose.’”

“I was sorry for her, very sorry for her; she spoke and she looked restless, but through all her restlessness there ran the strong vein of genuine liking for me. She had done wrong, and I had been the means of her wrong-doing and her mother’s being discovered, but she never gave me one reproach, or seemed to have one hard thought about me; one isn’t loved like that every day; it told on me in time. Without having any definite aim, I let myself

drift along, seeing her often, finding out, gradually, that there was a fine original nature, perverted as it had been by training, and education, and example; and at last I took the leap, and asked her to be my wife. Her devotion to me is absolute. We shall begin our new life with as fair a chance of happiness, perhaps, as most people, for we shall begin it in a place where there will be no knowledge of her past life to prejudice people against her, and mortify me."

He ceased speaking, and looked wistfully at his sister; and she went over to him and kissed him, and wished him happiness firmly, and felt the while that the ground had been cut from under her feet completely by this last announcement of his. The home over which Emmeline Vicary presided, could never be a home for her and her children, however excellent a person love might cause Emmeline to develop into. She constrained herself, and would utter no word of censure to her brother now. But she knew that his wife would be a barrier between Gilbert and herself, and she did feel terribly alone in the world.

In her bewilderment she felt a return of the old craving for Frank Stapylton's sympathy—a return of the old longing to tell him of all that interested her, and concerned her nearly—a positive need of friendly companionship in this unexpected trouble of hers.

"He likes Gilbert, and will never say any thing cutting or unkind, and yet he will know so well what I must feel about it," she said to herself as she sat alone that night, pondering over all the changes that had been wrought in the affairs of those who were dearest and nearest to her during the last two years. And when she did rouse herself from her somewhat gloomy meditations at last, it was with a return to the old glad conviction that at least she could rely in full security on Frank Stapylton.

He came to luncheon the next day as had been arranged, and all things were in favor of

his scheme of happiness at any rate. Horatia was openly anxious to greet him, openly glad to see him—impatient to tell him her news—and Gilbert was absent on duty with Miss Vicary.

She told him "all about it" in the eager, disjointed way in which people do tell facts to a sympathetic auditor of whom they are sure, and he listened as eagerly and responded as heartily as even she could desire. And she pleaded her brother's cause so warmly and so well, that Frank soon found himself declaring that "Gilbert was quite right—that a wife who loved him was more to a man than the world's approval," and that altogether, in this world of folly and sin, that human being is the wisest and the best who realizes before it is too late that love is enough.

All the surrounding conditions were in his favor, and she had not the heart nor the wish to break one of them. The reign of romance might be over with her, but reason told her that she would be infinitely happier with Frank than without him, and that, after all, good had come out of that exaggerated longing for Larpington which had carried her down to watch on the spot where first she had known Frank Stapylton.

That the hope still lives that when Cecil dies little Gerald's claim as next of kin will be established to the Larpington estates is only natural. But it is no longer the engrossing hope of her life. For she is the well-cared-for wife of a wealthy man, who will take good care of her children's future, even should that poor creature in the asylum linger on for years.

As for Gilbert, he is thriving, prosperous, satisfied, and perfectly contented with a wife who worships him; while Frank is thriving, prosperous, and perfectly satisfied with a wife whom he worships. In matrimony, as in friendship and love, to be perfectly happy, one of the firm must feel and act on the feeling that it is "more blessed to give than to receive."



1830
 The first of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought.

The second of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain.

The third of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought.

The fourth of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain.

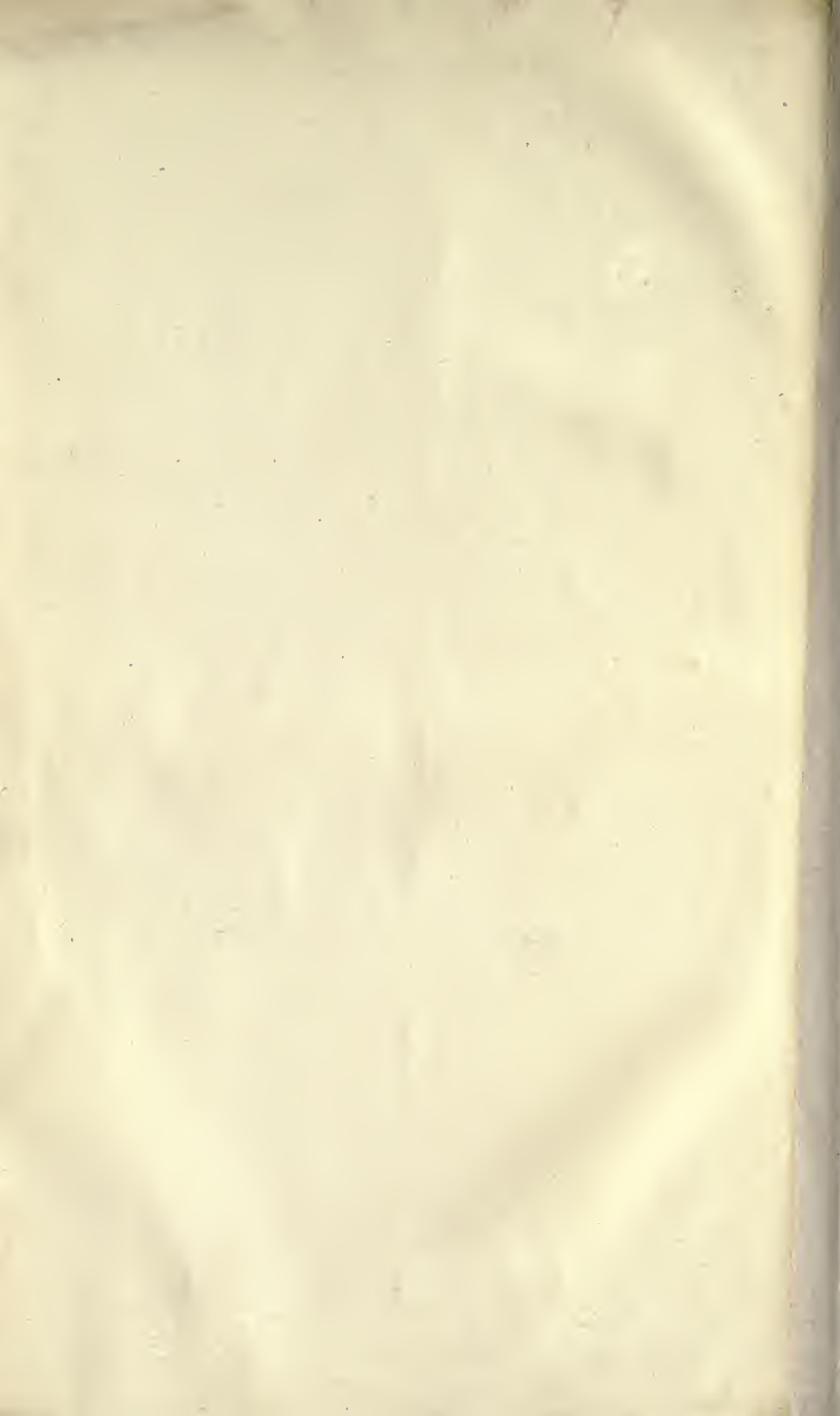
The fifth of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought.

The sixth of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain.

The seventh of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought.







PR
4104
M9
1873

Besant, (Sir) Walter
My little girl

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